

Kaisa Hynynen

FROM UNSUSTAINABLE HAVING TO SUSTAINABLE BEING?

Perceptions of wellbeing among university students

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ABSTRACT

Kaisa Hynynen: From unsustainable having to sustainable being? Perceptions of wellbeing among university students

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Due to the growing human-made impact on the planet and the predominance of the economic sphere over the social and the ecologic, we are witnessing a global crisis. In the context of humanity's increasingly unsustainable being in the world and the problematic definition of wellbeing primarily in economic terms based on increasing consumption and material wealth, the aim of this master's thesis was to study *how university students* - the consumers, possible future parents, professionals, global citizens and the decisions-makers of tomorrow - *perceive wellbeing*. The study was approached through the theorisation of *sustainable wellbeing* and analysed by utilising the *relational, multidimensional* and *needs-based* model of wellbeing. The model presents a holistic conceptualisation of wellbeing, founded on the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans with other humans and ecosystems. The study consisted of eight interviews with Finnish university students at the University of Tampere, with a focus on the students' subjective perceptions of wellbeing and how being well (and illbeing) was actualised in their lives.

The findings showed that the students extended their perceptions of wellbeing beyond their own lives, social circles, species and national borders and beyond current generations on Earth. The students perceived wellbeing in a multidimensional and relational manner and their perceptions reflected the topical sustainability concerns. In summary, the access to and the quality of material resources enabled by the welfare state created the foundation for the students' wellbeing. The students furthermore supported their *well-becoming* with conscious practices and purposeful and meaningful activities they were able to engage in within their surroundings. According to the findings, the process of well-becoming required furthermore a sense of belonging and caring for one's social relations and the natural environment. In addition, the role of health and the pursuit of self-actualisation were perceived correlational with the other dimensions. The findings in this study thus emphasised the *relationality* of our being also on a global sphere: the interconnectedness and interdependence of the dimensions of wellbeing, furthermore with our social and ecological surroundings. As such, also barriers to more sustainable being were identified.

To conclude, the planetary boundaries and the societal structures define the limits within which individuals can fulfil their needs and pursue a meaningful life. The transformation towards sustainable societies requires then both individual and systemic change reflected in our values, practices, policies and institutional structures, and the value change can also be supported by education on sustainability. Thus, the social policy of tomorrow has the potential to support the sustainable (well) being of global citizens by participating in the reconceptualization of the ultimate goal of social policy, our wellbeing.

Keywords: *sustainable wellbeing, university students, relationality, human needs, social sustainability, ecological sustainability, the HDLB-model*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Wellbeing has for long been of interest to societies, politicians and researchers alike. Debates over wellbeing and the ‘good life’ and the role of individuals, society and the state in ensuring and promoting it go back as far as the ancient Greeks (e.g. Bache & Scott, 2018). Although there is no unanimous definition of wellbeing it is stated to be something that all people recognise and wish to attain – a goal of human action. It is likewise the ultimate objective of social and economic policy (e.g. Helne, 2014). The wealth of a nation and political success is measured by citizens’ wellbeing that nowadays goes beyond measuring mere Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or life expectancy. The development of citizens’ wellbeing is also the starting point and goal of Finnish public policy. (Saari, 2011, p. 9.)

Modern society is organised around a specific model: increasing consumption of goods and services leads to improved wellbeing, that is, a higher standard of living and a quality of life across society (e.g. Jackson, 2008). The prevailing wellbeing paradigm is thus largely based on material wealth and high levels of production, consumption and use of natural resources. In other words, the word ‘wellbeing’ is often used to mean ‘well-having’ in the political discourse (Hopwood, Mellor & O’Brien, 2005). This also applies to Finnish politics - economic growth entails progress and is thus considered a channel to pursue wellbeing and a good life (e.g. Häikiö & Saikkonen, 2010; Salonen, 2014). However, what was once deemed necessary for the ‘good life’ pursued through industrialism, progress and economies of scale in Western democratic societies is no longer economically, politically, psychologically nor ecologically sustainable (O’Hara & Lyon, 2014, pp. 104-105).

The relation of wellbeing and economic growth is complex and multifaceted, and is linked increasingly with questions on environmental burdens, degradation and the limits of our planet. Unprecedented growth and prosperity have already resulted in serious environmental pollution and depletion of natural resources and the problems are expected to worsen with time. Moreover, the Earth’s population is estimated to increase by over 2 billion people in the next couple of decades: a total of 70% is estimated to be living in cities and the world economy is estimated to use about 80% more energy by 2050 if no significant policy action is taken. Thus, expected demographic shifts, growth of global GDP and rising living standards continue to imply significant environmental consequences and impacts on human health. (OECD, 2012.)

Due to human activity, our planet has transitioned into a new geological epoch, *the Anthropocene*, in which humanity is faced with a dual challenge: how to stop the degradation of ecosystems and an

excessive depletion of the environment and natural resources while providing equitable conditions for people on a finite planet (WWF, 2016). In broad terms, the concept of sustainable development attempts to combine growing environmental concerns with socio-economic issues (Hopwood et al., 2005). In the sustainable development dialogue the ecologic, social and economic dimensions are often seen as being parallel to one another; however, both the social and ecologic spheres are increasingly threatened by an economic system of capital accumulation (e.g. Gough, 2017).

Nowadays, many scholars share the concern that our wellbeing, the capacity to meet our needs and the ability to pursue a meaningful life depend equally on the environment and our shared resources, with repercussions extending far into the future (e.g. Jackson, 2009; Helne, Hirvilammi & Laatu, 2012; Hämäläinen, 2013; Meadowcroft, 2013; Gough, 2017). It has thus been proposed that the focus should shift from seeing people as consumers to thinking about *their roles* as citizens and participants in a community (Dodds, 1997) and furthermore to seeing people as citizens in a global community. From our perspective, even though the population growth in Finland is not significant compared to developing countries, it is noteworthy that the carbon footprint of Finns is one of the largest in the world. In addition, we increasingly consume imported natural resources and pollute our common atmosphere. (Helne et al., 2012, p. 48.) Our actions thus have an impact beyond our national borders.

However, it has not been the custom in ‘traditional’ socio-political decision-making to raise questions over long-term ecological sustainability nor the interrelated connection of humans and ecosystem. The prevailing ‘human exemptionalism paradigm’, defined by Catton and Dunlap (1980), has long placed the humans and societies at the centre stage, exempt from ecological constraints. A growing number of researchers have, however, acknowledged this complicated relation. Ecological sustainability is increasingly regarded as the prerequisite for the social and economic spheres; as such, both the research and socio-political decision-making ought to take seriously the pursuit of ecological sustainability (e.g. Helne et al., 2012). Bai et al. (2016, p. 360) also stress that ‘the realization of the Anthropocene provides an opportunity not only to reconsider the power and consequences of human actions, but also how to channel the transformative and creative potentials of human society towards desirable and novel futures in the Anthropocene.’

According to the proponents of a ‘strong sustainability’ approach, a profound change towards a sustainable world is still missing on a global scale. A variety of factors that hinder this change have been identified, such as the relentless focus on unsustainable economic growth, the pursuit of short-term fixes rather than policy change, the ambiguity of the goals of sustainable development and the definition of wellbeing primarily in economic terms. Thus, a broader understanding of wellbeing

founded on the interconnectedness of human wellbeing and the vitality of ecosystems is needed. (Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015, pp. 167-169.) This quest towards a more sustainable future has been approached through the theorisation of a *sustainable wellbeing* perspective (e.g. Helne et al., 2012; Hämäläinen, 2013; Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014; Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015; Hirvilammi, 2015; Helne & Hirvilammi, 2017; Gough, 2017).

Two recent Finnish surveys, the Youth barometer (Nuorisobarometri 2018) (Pekkarinen & Myllyniemi, 2019) and the Climate barometer (Ilmastobarometri 2019) (Kantar TNS, 2019), show that the concerns over sustainability and climate change are topical in Finland. In the former, the promotion of sustainable development and prevention of environmental destruction are strongly visible in the lives of Finnish youth, and the concern over climate change has drastically increased in the last ten years (Pekkarinen & Myllyniemi, 2019). According to the Climate barometer, an increasing number of Finns (70% in 2019 vs 52 % in 2015) want the next government to tackle the climate crisis with effective policy-making. Among the most ambitious supporters of climate action are the highly educated Finns and the young. (Kantar TNS, 2019.) Regarding the necessity of continuous economic growth, the attitudes of the younger generations in Finland differ also greatly when compared to older generations according to the Youth barometer 2016 and the study by the Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA (see Apunen, Haavisto, Hopia & Toivonen, 2016).

The empirical evidence of individual values has already shown that a post-materialistic value shift has been occurring in wealthy Western nation-states among younger generations; the focus on economic and physical security has moved towards values of autonomy, self-expression and quality of one's life (Inglehart, 2008). Hämäläinen (2013, p. 22) thus argues, that the development of a sustainable society depends on our values, beliefs, mental frames and practices that can be altered through collective learning. Furthermore, Salonen & Bardy (2015) have discussed the notion of 'ecosocial civilisation' as the foundation for living well within planetary boundaries, and the transformative power of education has also been emphasised in relation to more sustainable living (Goleman, Bennet & Barlow, 2012; Wals & Benavot, 2017; Cook, 2018). Salonen & Helne (2012) have thus brought attention to the role of knowledge possessed by students as the students are the consumers, possible parents and decision-makers of tomorrow.

Despite there being previous studies in relation to sustainability, no studies conducted specifically on university students and their perceptions of wellbeing in relation to sustainability appear to exist. As the consumers, possible future parents, professionals, global citizens and the decisions-makers of tomorrow, university students' perceptions could give insights into the formation of wellbeing in the

context of our unsustainable being in the world and increase the understanding of the role of education in wellbeing, furthermore in relation to sustainability. Moreover, these perceptions could also provide considerations over the role of social policy in its fundamental goal of producing wellbeing.

The aim of this research is therefore to study the wellbeing perceptions of university students in Finland. I am specifically interested in the university students' subjective perceptions of their wellbeing and how being well (and illbeing) is actualised in their lives. Theoretically, I therefore approach wellbeing as a process of *well-becoming* in the context of an ecologically unsustainable world and understand wellbeing as a multidimensional and relational construct founded on need theories. As a result, I utilised a theoretical, relational and multidimensional needs-based model of wellbeing to interpret the students' perceptions. The research question I thus posed was: How do university students perceive wellbeing? To answer the research question, I conducted eight qualitative interviews with Finnish university students that were undertaking a course 'Introduction to Sustainable Development Studies' at the University of Tampere¹.

This thesis is organised as follows: In the second chapter I review previous literature and turn my attention to the interpretation of wellbeing in the context of sustainable development and Finnish social policy. I outline the recent political and research interest in wellbeing in the abovementioned context and scrutinise what kind of considerations can the sustainable wellbeing perspective bring into these spheres. In chapter three I scrutinise the theoretical bases on sustainable wellbeing and outline the theoretical framework of this study before considering the methodological questions and explaining how the study was conducted in chapter four. In chapter five I present the central findings of the study and illustrate how the study participants perceive their wellbeing. Finally, chapter six consists of the discussion and assessment of the findings in relation to the theoretical framework and previous literature, after which I draw conclusions on the implications of this study.

¹ Note that at the time of the interviews it was the University of Tampere, whereas now it is known as Tampere University.

2. TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AND WELLBEING?

In this master's thesis, I will first turn my attention to the interpretation of wellbeing in the context of sustainable development and Finnish social policy. In the first sub-section I provide an overview on how the theme of wellbeing has been approached in the context of sustainable development and what is still missing in that perspective. In the second subsection I focus on wellbeing in the context of social policy development, specifically in Finland, as social policy has historically had and continues to have a central part in producing wellbeing for and mitigating the illbeing of citizens.

Since the Second World War the political interest in wellbeing has been defined by two waves. First, in the 1960s onwards due to interest in the objective quality of life measures and the development of social indicators and surveys particularly in advanced industrial countries. Second, in the 1990s due to rising environmental challenges, better understanding of the drivers of wellbeing and the measuring of subjective wellbeing for public policy purposes. (Bache & Scott, 2018.) In the last decade or so, the conceptualisation of wellbeing has become a particular interest of academics, policy-makers and civil society; the focus on wellbeing has been said to heighten particularly at the wake of the financial crisis as new indicators for progress and guiding tenets for policy beyond GDP have been sought for (Bache & Scott, 2018).

In recent times, wellbeing has additionally been given increasing attention within development and sustainability frameworks, in both research and political discussions. While Tim Jackson's work *Prosperity Without Growth* (2009) voiced concerns over the relation of prosperity and economic growth on a finite planet, the comprehensive work by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, commonly known as the Stiglitz' report (Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi, 2009), stressed the shift of emphasis from economic production towards measuring wellbeing, furthermore in the context of sustainability. Aimed particularly at policy-makers and the academia, the report raised questions over 'societal values, for what we, as a society, care for and whether we are really striving for what is important' (Stiglitz et al., 2009, p. 18). Furthermore, for the Wellbeing in Developing Countries Research Group the concept of wellbeing represented 'a means of reconnecting different strands of development thinking and of drawing upon wider social science contributions to improve our understanding of the dynamics of poverty' (McGregor, 2007, p. 3). Drawing on the theory of human needs, resources and quality of life, and with vast empirical evidence, the WeD group's contributions have provided insights into considerations of global

wellbeing and aspects of equity, thus, providing understanding for the sphere of sustainability and development.

In Finland, the first extensive publication in Finnish focusing on environmental-theoretical discussions in social sciences was produced in 2009 (Massa, 2009). The work overviewed the theoretical traditions to date, presented how the environment has been conceptualised in these traditions and how the relations of the environmental, social, political and economic spheres have been dealt with. More recently, the relations of sustainability and wellbeing have been approached widely in the trilogy published by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Helne et al., 2012; Helne & Silvasti, 2012; Helne, Hirvilammi & Alhanen, 2014). The trilogy was a part of a research project (Toinen sosiaalipolitiikka) with a goal to examine how the themes of climate change, pressing ecological crisis, the limits to natural resources and over-consumption could be better addressed in social policy, the social security system and their development. In the publication by The Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra (2013), Timo Hämäläinen has also emphasised the need for a *sustainable wellbeing approach* and a new socio-economic model. Furthermore, Tuuli Hirvilammi has theorised *sustainable wellbeing* in her doctoral thesis (2015) by integrating ecological questions into (traditional) wellbeing research. Recently, arguments have also been raised for the need for a *relational paradigm* and *ecosocial policy* or *transition* (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014; Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015; Helne & Hirvilammi, 2017) and *ecosocial approach to wellbeing* (Salonen & Konkka, 2015). These and other relevant arguments in relation to more sustainable being and social policy development are then scrutinised in the following chapters.

2.1. Wellbeing and sustainable development

The Earth's support systems have been at a relatively stable state for the past 10 000 years, described as the period of Holocene, during which the ecological foundations for the existence of human civilisation were formed. A new geological period has now been identified, where humans have begun to have a considerable and negative global impact on ecosystems. The research and literature on the effects of climate change and the Earth's ecological boundaries is extensive and growing, and it is increasingly acknowledged that climate change is a great 'threat multiplier' that poses a serious threat to human wellbeing. In order to pursue sustainable wellbeing, that is, wellbeing for all current and future generations, the Earth's biophysical boundaries must be respected, which thus entail considerations over equity and social justice on a global level. (Gough, 2017.)

It is often stated that the current interest in sustainability and sustainable development was initiated with the report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (commonly known as the Brundtland Report) (WCED, 1987). As a political concept, sustainable development aims to incorporate economic, social and ecological questions into wider political discussions, frameworks and decision making. The Brundtland report placed ecological concerns in a global political context and defined sustainable development as *a process of change* for our common future. (WCED, 1987.)

It was then stated ‘Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED, 1987, p. 16). The report served a global notice and raised awareness on challenges such as environmental degradation, functionality of the Earth’s biosphere, growing social and economic inequality and poverty that hinder the wellbeing and survival of the Earth’s species, humans included. Economic issues and the pursue of growth could no longer be separated from environmental concerns and the Earth’s limited resources. On a global political sphere, humans’ relationship with the environment became seen as a relation in crisis and the global concerns of poverty and rising economic inequality were linked to questions on wellbeing, needs² and environmental consequences. (WCED, 1987.)

It has been stated that even though specific goals and targets on economic, social and ecological dimensions have been set and build upon, the greatest challenges continue to prevail. Environmental impacts continue to accumulate as long as the world population grows, prosperity increases, and production technology consumes natural resources or causes emissions³. Consumer demand and increased production in turn accelerate exploitation of the Earth’s resources. (Helne et al., 2012.) As such, the term ‘Great Acceleration’ is used to describe the human made impacts on Earth from the 1950s onwards and ‘the global-scale consequences of cumulative local actions’ (see Bai et al., 2016, p. 355).

Critical takes on the politics of sustainable development are prominent. Researchers from a variety of fields have pointed out the inadequacy of the politics of sustainable development to meet the defined goals and targets and properly tackle the global environmental crisis that also increasingly links to questions on wellbeing. (e.g. Hämäläinen, 2013; Meadowcroft, 2013.) While old problems

² The concept of needs in the context of wellbeing is discussed in a later chapter.

³ This explanation is based on the Ehrlich equation (IPAT), which is often used in the field of ecological economics to measure and evaluate human caused environmental impacts (Helne et al., 2012, p. 20).

are solved, new ones continue to emerge and aggregate environmental burdens continue to rise. It has thus been pointed out that even though sustainable development strategies have produced societal reflection and challenged modern societies, they have often been mere cosmetic changes without actual effect in decision making (Meadowcroft, 2013, p. 990).

Conflicting interpretations over the somewhat vague meaning of sustainable development have not thus challenged the prevailing socio-economic order in which the pursue of economic growth is still largely at the centre of decision-making processes. Global politics is driven by economic principles based on mass production and consumption and an unequal division of welfare while environmental aspects remain a complementary factor. (e.g. Häikiö, 2014; Hämäläinen, 2013; Meadowcroft, 2013.) The profound human made change on the planet can thus no longer be seen as mere progress, but rather as a problematic relation of humans and nature that hinders the sustainability of the world's ecosystems, existence of humankind and wellbeing prospects (Helne et al., 2012; Steffen et al., 2018). Steffen et al. (2018, p. 8257) therefore argue for 'a Stabilized Earth pathway' that requires deliberate and coordinated actions by human societies, recognising the integral nature of humanity on the Earth System. Several critics of the predominance of economic growth have thus argued that a new, more holistic understanding of wellbeing is needed to steer our societies towards properly sustainable decision making and societal order (e.g. Jackson, 2009; Gough, 2017).

For almost thirty years the United Nations has gathered the international community to regular conferences and summits in which specific agreements and development agendas for 'people, planet and prosperity' have been drafted (the UN, 2015). The latest international steps towards a more sustainable future were taken in 2015 when two major global agreements were made: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted and the Paris treaty on greenhouse gases was agreed upon. In 2018, particularly after the publication of the Special Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2018), decision-makers were urged to undertake drastic measures and commit to the common agreements. According to the report, the world is already experiencing the consequences of 1°C of global warming such as extreme weather and rising sea levels. It has been estimated that by limiting warming to 1.5°C instead of 2°C 420 million fewer people would be exposed to severe heat waves and the impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems, including species loss and extinction, would be lower (IPCC, 2018). The SDG agenda has arguably begun to bridge the gap between environmental sustainability and social justice, however, according to some critics the Paris agreement is still too little, too late (Gough, 2017). It thus remains to be seen what the upcoming 2019 Climate Summit can bring.

2.2. Wellbeing and social policy development

According to a narrow interpretation social policy is seen as social security policy and wellbeing as a standard of living. In the broadest sense social policy encompasses various political processes, socio-political questions and daily practises, while wellbeing is seen as an all-encompassing yet a vague goal. (Häikiö & Saikkonen, 2010, p. 37.) Thus far, in academic social policy the concept of wellbeing has sparked interest particularly in relation to welfare: focus on economic utility and social protection ('doing well') has been juxtaposed with the focus on 'fully rounded humanity' and individual experiences ('being well') (Taylor, 2011, pp. 777-779). In this study, I follow Taylor (2011, pp. 777-779) and see the two concepts interdependent as the former creates the context for the latter; wellbeing is rather seen as a process (not simply an outcome) and it is both relational and contextual and therefore not separate from the welfare state. Regarding this research, it is also noteworthy that in Finnish there is one word to mean both wellbeing and welfare.

Since the wave of industrialisation, social policy has aided in alleviating social problems and inequalities among citizen groups and provided wellbeing through universal benefits and services (Helne et al., 2012). Little attention though has been given to the perspective that this function produces environmental impacts, especially when it is tied together with economic growth and higher standards of living. Gough (2017, p. 2) thus states, 'yet, with a few exceptions, the study of social policy has (blindly or wilfully) ignored the environment and the planetary limits within which the pursuit of human needs and wellbeing must necessarily take place.'

During the last century, the development of Finnish society has been called a success story. Finland is regarded a forerunner in many respects and measured with different wellbeing related indexes Finland has often placed among the best ten countries⁴. (Saari, 2011.) In the last 70 years, the field of Finnish social policy has undergone different stages of development and adaptation. From the 1950s onwards, social policy has been employed as a transforming force and particularly after the 1960s the Finnish welfare model has been based on the intertwined relation of economic growth, paid employment and social security (Laatu, Hirvilammi & Helne, 2012, p. 99).

Since the socio-political programme of Pekka Kuusi the role of the Finnish welfare state was to advance production and consumption – the enabling of socio-political income transfers promoted

⁴ See a summary of the best 15 countries measured with the following indexes between 2005-2010: Quality of Life index (2005), Satisfaction with Life (2006), United Nations Development Index (2009), Happy Life Years (2009), Prosperity Index (2009), Competitiveness Index (2010), Sustainable society index (2010) and Newsweek Index (2010) (Saari, 2011).

economic activity and purchase power and led to economic growth (Helne et al., 2012, pp. 44-45). Kuusi trusted that the expansion of democracy, increase of social equality and economic growth support one another and create a self-reinforcing, virtuous circle (Kettunen, 2012, p. 14). However, while Finland has been seen as one of the most equal countries in the world, no other Western country has experienced such rises in income inequality and unequal distribution of wealth among socio-economic groups during the turn to the 21st Century and its first decade (Saari, 2011).

During and after the 90s public financial deficit caused by the extensive welfare state, the welfare state has been seen as a burden. In recent decades the idea of the inseparable nature of the social and the economic has clouded the basic ideology and functions of social policy while new answers to socio-political questions have primarily been sought from the market. It has been argued that the traditional social policy has thus transformed towards a so-called liberalist 'social development policy', in which the individual has a greater responsibility of their own survival, wellbeing and health that also policy-making emphasises. (Karjalainen & Palola, 2011.) The current socio-economic model is becoming increasingly unsustainable on economic, social as well as ecological levels, but also in terms of individual wellbeing (e.g. Hämäläinen, 2013). Our environment affects our wellbeing, and the mounting environmental problems have a connection to social and health related concerns. However, only a few researchers have dealt with their intertwined relations in the Finnish welfare state dialogue.

It has been argued that the ecological problems and the limits of natural resources ought to be taken seriously and therefore social policy should be understood and placed in a wider context. Widespread criticism towards the circle of mass production and consumption has already been voiced over the years and the welfare state has been criticised for its complicated double role. Since the 1970s, increasing understanding and the acknowledgement of ecological problems has also produced ecological criticism towards welfare state as social policy is considered too committed to the productivistic welfare model without recognition of its ecological boundaries. Therefore, both *the concept of wellbeing* and *the ways to produce wellbeing* ought to be reconsidered, while social policy practices ought to be separated from the ecologically questionable aspiration of continuous growth. (Helne et al., 2012, pp. 44-46.)

It has been argued that the global ecological perspective should be included in social policy considerations and the question of how social policy can promote ecological sustainability should also be explored (Fitzpatrick, 1998, p. 22; Helne et al., 2012; Gough, 2017). Accordingly, Markku Oksanen (2011, p. 315) suggests that all decision-making and related courses of action with regard to

wellbeing, its production and distribution ought to be ecologically sustainable and equitable, and temporally, geographically and biologically as comprehensive as possible, in other words, future generations, global income equity and considerations beyond human race in mind.

Järvelä, Kröger & Silvasti (2012) stress that we need to pursue a society in which economically possible, socially and culturally acceptable and ecologically sustainable development is possible. On their part, Hirvilammi & Massa (2009, p. 129) have also introduced the concept of ‘a virtuous circle of sustainable development in a welfare state.’ Recently, some researchers have then brought to the fore different notions and concepts in relation to Finnish social policy and the need for change. Hämäläinen (2013) has talked about a *new socio-economic model*, Hirvilammi & Helne (2014) emphasise the need for an *ecosocial policy* or *transition* (see also Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015; Helne & Hirvilammi, 2017), Salonen & Konkka (2015) refer to an *ecosocial approach to wellbeing* and Toivo & Häikiö (2016) talk about *social policy in times of scarcity*. Common to all these views is the acknowledgement of our unsustainable being and the limits to economic growth that require rethinking of our societal structures and conceptualisations of wellbeing.

Toivo & Häikiö (2016, pp. 145-146) summarise that social policy of the future is culture changing: to direct individuals and communities towards more sustainable ways of life, we need practices and structures with which changes are feasible in the citizens’ daily lives. Some researchers have also stressed the notion of a paradigm shift founded on theorisation of sustainable wellbeing perspective. Salonen & Konkka (2015) underline the hierarchy and integration of ecological, social and economic aspects of wellbeing, based on post-materialist values and with a shift from individualism towards social cohesion. Hämäläinen (2013) also suggests a more holistic view on wellbeing to which sustainable development policies should be built upon; the transformation thus requires the adjustment of cultural frames, norms and values which then can lead to the development of new policies and institutions. Hirvilammi & Helne (2014) stress accordingly the broader understanding of human wellbeing and the importance of a paradigm shift to develop a coherent and integrated eco-social policy.

In summary, due to the pressing ecological challenges that also increasingly permeate our social, political and economic spheres, the social policy of the present and particularly of the future ought to take seriously the pursuit of sustainable wellbeing. By actively and strongly participating in the reconceptualization of the ultimate goal of social policy, our wellbeing, the social policy of the future can be culture changing. In this thesis I therefore engage in the reconceptualization by bringing attention to the perceptions of young adults in higher education, who are the consumers, possible

parents, professionals and decision-makers of tomorrow, and furthermore the citizens of our presently unsustainable society and the global world.

3. THEORISATION OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE WELLBEING

The basic question and core of wellbeing research is *what good life is* and what are the factors that contribute to our wellbeing. Summarised by Lamb & Steinberger (2017, p. 2), wellbeing is often used interchangeably with happiness, living standards, welfare, human development or quality of life and it has thus become ‘a catch-all term’ for evaluating and advancing good lives and a good society. As mentioned in the beginning of the first chapter, the focus on objective quality of life measures began to give a way for experienced accounts of wellbeing particularly towards the end of the 20th century. The interest towards subjective, experienced accounts on wellbeing increased especially after the study by Easterlin (1974) from the perspective of economic growth, and the amount of journal articles on the topic has grown extensively since the mid-1990s. In short, subjective wellbeing (SWB) is an umbrella term for people’s level of wellbeing according to their own evaluations. These evaluations can be both positive or negative, based on often self-reported measures of life-satisfaction and affective experiences. (Diener & Ryan, 2009.)

It has been stated that the growth in the field of subjective wellbeing research mirrors greater societal trends: the value of an individual, importance of subjective views and the recognition that wellbeing includes positive elements beyond economic prosperity; furthermore, it is a reaction against the focus on negative states in psychology (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). Accordingly, subjective wellbeing is regarded useful for policy-making as conventional economic indicators of quality of life such as GDP, income or employment position do not adequately assess the subjective quality of life (Tay, Kuykendall & Diener, 2015). Up to date, measures of subjective wellbeing have been used in many large-scale surveys and they have revealed interesting results. Jackson (2008; 2009) for instance has described the emerging wellbeing paradox, that is, stagnating or declining levels of subjective wellbeing despite of the growing consumption and income levels.

Resonating with the subjective/objective divide and reflecting ancient Greek philosophy, wellbeing theories are often divided into two opposing traditions or schools of thought, *hedonic* and *eudaimonic* approaches; yet, it is noted that the hedonic school is still dominant in both research and policy discourses (Brand-Correa & Steinberger, 2017, p. 44). In the hedonic approaches, wellbeing is equalled to happiness, pleasure or positive affect with a focus on outcome. Eudaimonic tradition on the other hand entails measuring wellbeing as *a process* - eudaimonic conceptions focus on the content of one’s life and realisation of valued human potentials. (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008.)

Lamb & Steinberger (2017, pp. 2-3) summarise that the hedonic wellbeing research and their provided insights are however ‘tempered by disciplinary perspectives’. As the focus is on the outcome, it has made the ‘consensus on the determinants of hedonic well-being elusive’: whereas psychological research prioritises mental or cognitive determinants, economic approach tends to focus for instance on income or employment, and sociological research considers the role of social (and economic) institutions. Their approaches to improve wellbeing then differ, often in favour of individual solutions as in the fields of psychological and economic research. (Lamb & Steinberger, 2017, pp. 2-3.)

The eudaimonic philosophy has on its part influenced a range of wellbeing approaches such as theories of human needs. As such, ‘A central concern of eudaimonic well-being is the need to incorporate diverse intercultural views on what constitutes a good life (and so avoid claims of paternalism), but remain specific enough to measure and operationalize the theory in practice’. (Lamb & Steinberger, 2017, p. 3.) John O’Neill (2008) has then discussed both hedonic and eudaimonic approaches in the context of sustainability and investigated how they compare when considering the connections of consumption, quality of life and the temporal perspective of future generations. Suggested by O’Neill (2008), the eudaimonic approach offers a better framework to address the questions of wellbeing and sustainability (also e.g. Hirvilammi, 2015; Brand-Correa & Steinberger, 2017; Lamb & Steinberger, 2017).

These two schools of thought thus approach the questions of wellbeing and sustainability in different ways. From the perspective of sustainable wellbeing, the hedonic approach is particularly problematic as more individual preferences and wants may entail higher levels of materialism and quick fixes, emphasised by the current political discourse of ‘well-having’. In the individualistic hedonic approach, the solutions then often rely on policy instruments and changes in individual behaviour, aiming to change the understanding of what constitutes wellbeing for instance with eco-labelling (Brand-Correa & Steinberger, 2017, p. 44). Although the hedonic approach arguably also has the potential to decouple consumption and wellbeing, ‘it has difficulties in showing how it is possible to extend the time-horizon of individuals and institutions so that the interests of future person can be better made to count in current choices’ (O’Neill, 2008, p. 3).

Furthermore, Kristoffer Wilén & Tiina Taipale (2019) have investigated the consumption patterns and their relations to identity formation of environmentally concerned individuals. In their study, the researchers conclude that the focus on individual behaviour towards green consumerism cannot be substituted for structural changes and reductions in consumption levels, thus perceiving people

primarily through their roles as consumers. Hence, perceiving people predominantly as citizens and how they can engage in and influence our societal issues can also have better implications for sustainability (Wilén & Taipale, 2019). The eudaimonic tradition thus places the individual in a broader societal context and highlights also the role of social institutions and political systems in enabling individual flourishing, furthermore by taking into account the past and future perspectives. As a result, the focus on flourishing also enables the scrutiny of resource use and alludes to the possible upper limits to consumption (see also O'Neill, 2008). (Brand-Correa & Steinberger, 2017, pp. 44-45.) The need for more *synergy* with regard to sustainability and wellbeing research emphasising their interdependencies has thus been called for (e.g. Kjell, 2011), and for instance the perspective of eudaimonic wellbeing and the aspects of climate change mitigation have recently been discussed together (Lamb & Steinberger, 2017).

In this master's thesis I thus approach wellbeing as a process of *well-becoming* in the context of an ecologically unsustainable world and understand wellbeing as a multidimensional and relational construct founded on need theories. In the first subsection of this chapter, I briefly scrutinise the relational perspective that stresses the interconnections of wellbeing and our (environmental and societal) surroundings. In the second subsection, I continue with the relational and multidimensional needs-based model of wellbeing to further define the theoretical framework of my research.

3.1. The relational perspective on wellbeing

Throughout the last half a century the field of wellbeing research has become more varied and extensive. One of the recent undertakings is the relational perspective on wellbeing that goes beyond subjective or psychological views on wellbeing. For Sarah White (2015), the concept is grounded on the interpretivist tradition in social sciences in which people are approached as subjects in specific social and cultural contexts. The relational view is grounded on a set of approaches that challenge the dominance of psychology and economics in framing popular conceptualisation of wellbeing. For White (2015, p. 43), wellbeing is social and collective and goes beyond the individual: 'Relationships thus form a central focus, as both the means through which (psychological and material) goods are distributed and needs are met, and as intrinsic to the constitution and experience of wellbeing.'

Taylor (2011) also sees wellbeing as a process, oriented to being well enough with others. Taylor (2011, p. 780) thus states that human needs can be divided into 'thick' and 'thin' ones – what one needs to thrive and to 'be well' and what one needs for survival, 'to be'. Closer inter-personal

relationships generate a thicker sense of wellbeing and this view thus draws on the Aristotelian binary of eudaimonia and hedonia – a deeper sense of fulfilment and satisfaction contrary to a more superficial experience of happiness (Taylor, 2011). Furthermore, research on the determinants of subjective well-being has already shown that even though sufficient income supports the feelings of happiness, results highlight that the social context in relation to experienced wellbeing is yet more important (Helliwell, 2014).

Nowadays many scholars argue that our wellbeing, the capacity to meet our needs and pursue a meaningful life depends equally on the environment and our shared resources, with repercussions extending far into the future (e.g. Basu, Kaplan & Kaplan, 2014). Some researchers have thus taken the relational approach further. Helne & Hirvilammi (2017) note that concepts such as wellbeing are dynamic forces embedded in our practices (the ways of behaving, acting and thinking) and linked to human needs, or wants, which can be considered either sustainable or unsustainable. Hence, to replace the prevailing and unsustainable ‘human exemptionalism paradigm’⁵ Hirvilammi & Helne (2014) have argued for a *relational paradigm* in which human activities would be directed towards greater social and environmental responsibility.

The relational view of existence is essential to the deep ecology or ecosophy developed by Arne Naess from the 1970s onwards, and through the relational paradigm the researchers stress the symbiotic relationship of humans and nature (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014, pp. 2163-2164). It has also been suggested that the narrow concept of *homo economicus* should be replaced by the concept of *homo ecologicus* that stresses the human-nature relationship and goes beyond mere self-interest and perspective of survival (Becker, 2006). Helne & Hirvilammi (2017, pp. 3-4) have additionally introduced the concept of *homo iunctus* (the connected man) in which the role of interpersonal relations is central and therefore prefer to speak of the ‘relational self’ (self in relations) (see Ketokivi, 2010).

Salonen & Åhlberg (2012) have also stressed the perspective of *planetary responsibility* that extends beyond human race to ecosystems and natural resources; this perspective requires a holistic vision that entails changes in wellbeing paradigms and how we think, orient ourselves in life and view the world. For instance, in their study on Finnish students and sustainable development perspectives

⁵ The researchers note that the concept of paradigm is often used in relation to any predominant mental models in society. It became commonly known through the seminal book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by Thomas Kuhn (1970; originally 1962). (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014, p. 2161.)

Salonen & Åhlberg (2012) found a clear attitude-behaviour gap in all assessed statements⁶. In the study, Finnish students in the field of social services (n=210) assessed 36 statements about environmental, social and economic sustainability according to the importance and implementation in their everyday lives. The students also provided 464 comments about barriers to sustainable living. According to the researchers, the move towards planetary responsibility thus requires both individual behaviour change (attitudes) and societal change (context) in order to attain the goals of sustainability in high-consumption societies. (Salonen & Åhlberg, 2012.)

In summary, the relational paradigm further adds an important perspective to the field of wellbeing research, particularly in the framework of sustainability. For this thesis and theoretical framework, the relational ‘lens’ is thus central to comprehend the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans with humans and the natural environment. In the next sub-section I then turn my attention to the dimensions of wellbeing and review the theoretical, relational and multidimensional needs-based model of wellbeing.

3.2. Wellbeing as a multidimensional and needs-based construct

It has been argued that due to the predominance of economic thinking even the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) failed to adequately address the multidimensionality of needs and included therefore primarily references to the fulfilment of material ones (e.g. Helne, 2019, p. 230). However, researchers nowadays widely agree wellbeing is a multidimensional construct. Hence, in the past decades there have been various attempts to develop ‘theorisation and lists of basic needs, functionings, and related concepts’ in relation to human wellbeing (Gough, McGregor & Camfield, 2007, p. 13). Gough et al., (2007) for instance see wellbeing both as a relational and dynamic concept, dependent on and influenced by our social, political, economic and cultural surroundings; hence, wellbeing is not just an outcome, but also a process. In relation to identifying what constitutes *sustainable wellbeing*, Gough (2017) has characterised (at least) six theoretical features of *universal human needs*: needs are objective, plural, non-substitutable (cannot be traded off against others), satiable (in a sense that thresholds can be achieved in certain spheres), cross-generational, and they can be defined in universal terms across time and space. In addition, (present and future) needs always trump consumer preferences and the universal needs furthermore ‘imply ethical obligations on

⁶ The data was collected in 2008-2009 at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and the variables were based on different UN, EU-wide and national sustainable development strategies (Salonen & Åhlberg, 2012, p. 16).

individuals and claims of justice – universal rights and obligations – on social institutions’. (Gough, 2017, pp 45-47.)

On their part, Hirvilammi & Helne (2014) approach wellbeing from the assumption that is it something recognised and aspired by all species; for humans, it is a process of self-actualisation, of *well-becoming*. In their approach, they refer to the idea of *self-realisation* by Arne Naess (1995) that the joy and meaning of life is enhanced by fulfilling inherent potentials and by increased self-realisation. They furthermore refer to Abraham Maslow’s *theory of human needs* (2011; original 1962), in which self-actualisation is placed high. As such, Hirvilammi & Helne (2014) note that rather than focusing on wellbeing deprivation, the Maslowian conception places emphasis on the positive potential of human beings and how their potentials and capacities can be fulfilled.

For Maslow (2011), the terms of being, becoming and self-actualisation are then synonyms in a sense that they refer to a continuous betterment and growth towards the complete functioning of human capacities, a wholeness of self and completion of one’s mission in life (see Helne, 2019, p. 236). Along the lines of other need theorists, Hirvilammi & Helne (2014, p. 2165) thus argue that ‘wellbeing depends on the possibilities people have to adequately actualize their fundamental needs of both kinds’, meaning both deficiency as well as growth needs (self-actualisation): whereas the deficiency or deprivation needs are alleviated with the help of certain goods, ways of acting or through different institutional structures, fulfilment of growth needs can be regarded as a process in which one’s capacities and potentials can be enhanced without specific limits.

In their approach for a relational and multidimensional, needs-based model of sustainable wellbeing, Hirvilammi & Helne (2014) refer to the contributions of sociologist Erik Allardt. In the 1970s, Allardt developed a needs-based, tripartite conceptualisation of wellbeing in which he defines ‘the central necessary conditions of human development and existence’ in three words: Having, Loving and Being (1993, p. 89). For Allardt (1976), needs were socially defined and therefore they were also value-bound; hence, he defined the basic needs of human according to *the needs related to material and impersonal resources* (Having), *needs related to love, companionship and solidarity* (Loving) and *needs denoting self-actualisation and the opposing of alienation* (Being). Allardt (1990, pp. 16-17; 1993) additionally advanced the notion that when studying the degree of human wellbeing it is crucial to examine the relations of our biological and physical environment and furthermore our material level of living.

Hirvilammi & Helne (2014) have lately modified and extended the original conceptualisation into four dimensions, the Having, Doing, Loving and Being -model (HDLB). In short, the dimension of Having consists of *a decent and fair standard of living* and therefore implies the fulfilment of material and impersonal needs. It furthermore alludes to the awareness of the limits of the planet and the optimal level of need fulfilment and thus ‘moderate’ use of natural resources. Contrary to Allardt’s conceptualisation, Doing is not a part of Being, but its own entity due to its centrality for human and environmental wellbeing (see Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014; Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015). The dimension of Doing then encompasses *purposeful and responsible activities* as the daily activities humans engage in differ in their environmental impacts. For its part, the dimension of Loving then includes *connective and compassionate relations to others*, including the natural environment and other species. It furthermore encompasses the local and global and the present and future perspectives. Finally, the dimension of Being involves *alert presence*, including the need for self-actualisation and personal growth, and aspects of mental and physical health. (Allardt & Uusitalo, 1972). (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014.) The aspects of ‘being’ thus bring about a shift from negativity and deprivation towards ‘positivity and plenitude’ (Helne, 2019, p. 237). The HDLB-model is depicted in the table below and it exhibits the four thematic dimensions and the indicators for different thematic needs.

Table 1. The HDLB-model: dimensions and indicators
(Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014, p. 2169)

Having - a decent and fair standard of living	
The needs of Having are met through material resources , such as:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural resources: water, food, materials for clothing, construction, <i>etc.</i> - Economic resources: income and wealth - Shelter - Energy - Basic consumption items
Doing - purposeful and responsible activities	
The needs of Doing can be actualized by many different kinds of activities a person is engaged in, such as:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meaningful paid work - Social and political activities - Housekeeping - Education and learning - Leisure-time activities - Nature activities (gardening, hiking, <i>etc.</i>)
Loving - connective and compassionate relations to others	
The needs of Loving can be fulfilled by belonging to or caring for:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family and kin - Friends - Local communities and society

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global community and the future generations - Other species and nature
Being - alert presence	
The needs of Being can be fulfilled, for example, when a person:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is in good physical and mental health - Can fulfill his/her inherent potential - Feels a sense of autonomy - Is creative - Is striving toward serenity, goodness and unselfishness - Has experiences of wholeness, aliveness and self-sufficiency

In the relational and multidimensional HDLB-model, *relationality* implies two things: human wellbeing is placed in the context of ecosystems, meaning that we depend on and influence the resources and services of our surroundings, producing thus environmental impacts; in addition, human wellbeing is understood multidimensionally, consisting of interdependent categories of needs. Hence, nature plays a vital role in ensuring human wellbeing and the fulfilment of needs. (Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015.) Furthermore, as the four dimensions overlap, many activities and practices support the fulfilment of needs simultaneously (Helne, 2019). The relational and multidimensional view of wellbeing is illustrated below in Figure 1.

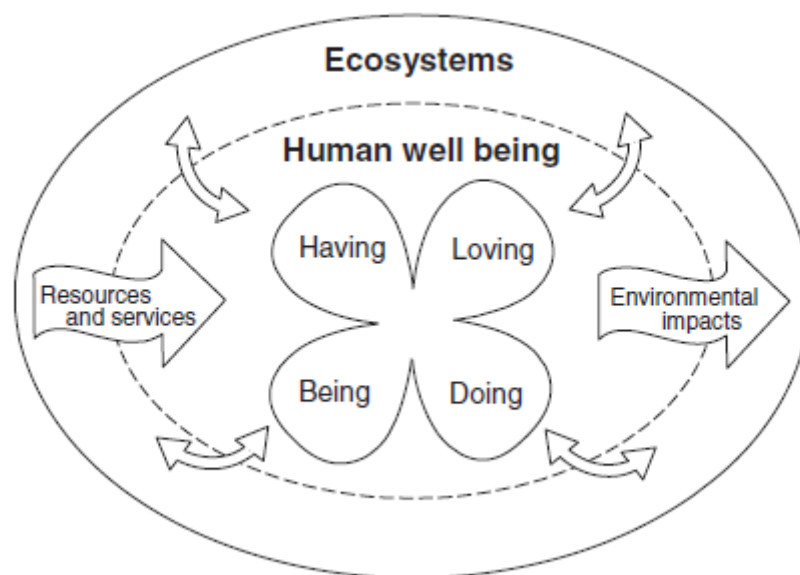


Figure 1. The relational and multidimensional view of wellbeing
(Helne & Hirvilammi, 2015, p. 71)

The HDLB-model thus pertains to the Aristotelian conceptualisation of wellbeing and the eudaimonic tradition, therefore bringing attention to the role and development of human potentials and capacities in the pursuit of the ‘full realisation of humanness’ and the respect of all life forms (Helne, 2019, p. 236). The multidimensional and relational needs-based model of wellbeing therefore provides the theoretical and analytical framework in this thesis, through which I approach the empirical part of the thesis and analyse how the participants in this study perceive wellbeing.

4. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will first give an overview of the design of this study. Then I will outline how the data was collected, present background information on the study participants, consider epistemological questions of my thesis and reflect on the guidelines of ethics with regard to interview research. Finally, I will go through the process of data analysis.

4.1. Study design

Due to the humankind's increasingly unsustainable being in the world and the predominance of the economic sphere over the social and the ecologic, both the human and planetary wellbeing are increasingly threatened. Moreover, due to the pursuit of economic growth and higher standards of living our wellbeing has continued to be defined primarily in economic terms based on increasing production, consumption and use of natural resources. Therefore, this study is approached through the theorisation of sustainable wellbeing that is founded on the interconnectedness and interdependence with our ecosystems.

According to the Youth barometer (Pekkarinen & Myllyniemi, 2019) and the Climate barometer (Kantar TNS, 2019), concerns over climate change and sustainability are emphasised particularly among the highly educated Finns and the young. Despite there being previous studies in relation to sustainability, no studies conducted specifically on university students and their perceptions of wellbeing in that context appear to exist. Thus, the aim of this research is to scrutinise the wellbeing perceptions of university students. As such, I am interested in the students' subjective perceptions of their wellbeing and how being well (and illbeing) is actualised in their lives.

This research seeks answers to the research question: *How do university students perceive wellbeing?* As the consumers, possible future parents, professionals, global citizens and the decisions-makers of tomorrow, university students' perceptions could give insights into the formation of wellbeing in the context of our unsustainable being in the world and provide to our understanding of the role of education in wellbeing, furthermore in relation to sustainability. Subsequently, these perceptions could also bring insights into the role of social policy in its paramount goal of producing wellbeing.

The aforementioned surveys provided survey-based knowledge on issues related to wellbeing, and it was therefore essential to provide also qualitative knowledge on the topic. As I was interested in the

wellbeing perceptions of young adults in higher education, I therefore regarded interviews as the most suitable approach for this study. To answer the research question, I conducted eight semi-structured focused interviews with Finnish university students at the University of Tampere. I recruited the students from the course ‘Introduction to Sustainable Development Studies’ and conducted the interviews during February and March 2016. To interpret the students’ perceptions, I then utilised the relational and multidimensional needs-based model of wellbeing as my analytical framework.

4.2. Data gathering: qualitative interviews

In qualitative research the element of cooperation forms the base for an interview. The interview is constructed in interaction and through a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee – together they form the discourse of the interview (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori, 2005). The traditional critique of interview research is based on the premise that the interviewees should be given enough space to openly narrate their thoughts and experiences. When defining the interview questions, the researcher should therefore carefully consider what kind of data they want to collect and what will they do with it. It is noteworthy that the interviewees do not offer readymade results; people rather possess experience-based knowledge and everyday understandings of the nature of culture and society that the researcher then analyses according to the chosen guidelines. (Hyvärinen, 2017.)

As described in the previous section, this research is particularly interested in subjective perceptions of interview participants with regard to their experienced wellbeing. A qualitative approach and semi-structured focused interviews were therefore chosen as the preferred method. In Finnish language, *focused interview* (teemahaastattelu), adopted by Hirsjärvi & Hurme (1979), is used as a general term. In focused interview the researcher does not pose strict questions but rather defines the central themes to be discussed in the interview. (Hyvärinen, 2017.) Focused interview is thus considered a semi-structured mode of interviewing: in each interview general themes and topics remain the same, but the order and formation of questions may vary (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori, 2005).

As an interview can never be completely unstructured, most interviews in qualitative research are semi-structured. When choosing focused interview as the preferred approach, the interviewer must consider whether the interviewees can affect the selection process of themes or their emphasis during the interview. In other words, the interviewee may not consider a chosen theme as important and may bring up and emphasise another theme more important to him. (Hyvärinen, 2017.) From this

perspective, it was therefore important to give the interviewees enough time and space to bring up perspectives important to them, around the chosen themes of the interview.

4.2.1. Interview participants

In this sub-section, I describe the recruitment process and inclusion criteria of the interview participants and present background information of the eight participated interviewees. Due to my research approach and aspirations I therefore chose to focus on a small and selected group of interviewees without specific socio-economic or political inclusion criteria. All the eight participants were full-time students at the University of Tampere and as a group they could be defined as young adults. The only demographic criterion was that the students were to be Finnish due to the chosen recruitment process and more consistent data analysis.

The recruitment process began in January 2016. I considered the process easy as university students were already familiar with research and were presumably interested in participating in a study. I had chosen to recruit participants from a particular university course ‘Introduction to Sustainable Development Studies’ (YKYYKEKE0 Kestävän kehityksen johdantojakso), coordinated by the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Tampere. The course was open to students from different degrees and levels of studies and was the introductory part to a larger module consisting of studies from different Schools at the University of Tampere. I participated in one of the lectures and gave a short presentation about my planned research. The same information in a written form was also uploaded to the course’s Moodle platform. The interested students were asked to contact me via email and I reached the goal of eight students in a couple of days. I remained open to more possible interview participants, but no further students made contact. The collected background information of the interviewees is presented below.

Table 2. Background information of the interviewees

Participant	Year of birth	Gender	Place of residence	Study field
1	1993	F	Tampere	Economics; Responsible business
2	1988	M	Tampere	Social sciences
3	1988	F	Vaasa	English language and literature
4	1992	F	Tampere	Politics; Political science
5	1985	M	Tampere	Social psychology

6	1992	F	Tampere	Lifelong learning and education
7	1993	F	Tampere	Social policy
8	1991	M	Tampere	Journalism and communication

4.2.2. The interview process and data

I interviewed all the participants in person at the University of Tampere and the interviews were organised at the library's study facilities for both parties' convenience. Later, I transcribed the interviews. Before the actual interview I asked the participants to present any possible questions regarding the interview process via email or in person. At the scene of the interview, I also asked the participants to fill in a form with their background information including their name, year of birth, place of residence and the programme of study. The participants were furthermore asked to sign a consent form that is discussed in more detail under ethical considerations.

I tried to make the interview situation comfortable and trusting for the participants. With most participants we had decided to meet in the lobby beforehand. I offered them beverages from the cafeteria and together we continued to the study facilities. This gave us both time to chat and adjust to the situation. Some I met directly at the chosen study room due to time constraints. In this research all interviews were conducted in Finnish and the length of the interviews ranged from 31 to 44 minutes. Each interview followed roughly the same structure and the interview questions/themes are presented in Appendix 1.

As the aim was to get as close to the students' own perceptions as possible I had made sure not to reveal too much about the theoretical background of the research beforehand in order not to guide the participants' thought processes and direct their accounts of their wellbeing towards foreseeable answers. As an interviewer, it was also important to refrain from directing the discussion too much and instead give the interviewees enough time to narrate their experiences with each question and chosen theme. With each interview the process then became easier: I tried to learn from each experience and learned for example to notice the moments where I should have asked a further question regarding a certain perception or a point of view. I therefore often asked the participant to elaborate on a certain aspect or simply asked them to 'tell me more'. As the topic was wellbeing and contrary ill-being, I also encountered difficult or upsetting topics, such as mental health problems or losses of close-ones. An ethical researcher should therefore be a calm listener with a sense of empathy

and enable a trusting space for the interviewees to also share difficult aspects of their lives (Hyvärinen, 2017).

With regard to the data processing, recording helps the researcher to scrutinise the interview and the occurring interaction and its content in detail and in a more objective manner. Depending on the research and the method of analysis, the researcher may use the recorded data as an aid for memory or for example to verify interpretations. By replaying the interview, the researcher may encounter new nuances, hesitations or elaborations that he did not hear during the first time, or perhaps spot situations in which the interviewer has influenced the interviewee and directed towards a certain type of an answer. In sum, recording enables a more detailed data processing and thus evaluation of made interpretations. (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori, 2005.)

The chosen research questions and the method of analysis define the depth of the needed transcription of data; if the analytical focus is on interaction, more detailed transcribing is needed (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori, 2005). I conducted semi-structured focused interviews and therefore only spoken words were transcribed without specific markings for pauses, intonations or emphasis of words. The process of transcribing was nevertheless rather time consuming. Even though no specific markings were needed in my chosen approach, to some extent the varying and sometimes rather poor audio quality on few tracks complicated the transcription of the interview data.

4.2.3. Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines inform the conduct of research; thus, responsibly conducted and well-reasoned research is also ethical (Hyvärinen, 2017). In my thesis, I follow the guidelines by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK, n.d.) and their ethical principles regarding social scientific research. I therefore familiarised myself with the ethical principles beforehand and attempted to follow them by the book. The principles are divided into three areas: (1.) Respecting the autonomy of research subjects, (2.) Avoiding harm and (3.) Privacy and data protection (TENK, n.d.). Here, the aspects of voluntary participation and informed consent, avoidance of harm, confidentiality, anonymity and data protection are considered in more detail.

The ethical starting point to research is that the participants understand what the study is about, how it is conducted and how the collected data is used and stored. Therefore, both oral and written information about the research was provided for the interview participants. Here, informed consent is essential and by signing the consent form the participants allow the researcher to use their provided

information for the research in question. The interviewees understand their participation is voluntary and they are free to cancel their participation at any time without consequences. (Hyvärinen, 2017.)

The protection of privacy is a central principle in research ethics. The collection and processing of data as well as the publication of results are integral parts of the research process. Thus, the process includes various aspects to consider with regard to protecting the privacy of the participants. It is therefore important to acknowledge and evaluate the possible harm that can be caused to the participants during the process (TENK, n.d.) During an interview, an ethical researcher should act respectfully towards the interviewee and listen without judgment. It is also the responsibility of the researcher to ensure a confidential space to share experiences without extra ears. The researcher furthermore ensures confidentiality with regard to data processing. During this research process, the electronic interview data is therefore stored in a password secured file. The collected consent forms and the written background information of the participants are stored separately so that no other person than the researcher has access to them.

The participants are also guaranteed anonymity. During transcription the data is anonymised in a way that no individual person can be identified, which is also considered when interview extracts are analysed in the following chapters. (Hyvärinen, 2017.) This means that only indirect identifiers such as possible work place, study field, the place of residence and age are left visible in the final publication of this study. Finally, there is no need for the secondary use of the data and therefore the datasets and the papers including both direct and indirect identifiers are destroyed when this study has been completed.

4.3. Data analysis

When interviews are chosen as the preferred research method, three separate types of questions are needed: at least one *research question* to direct the structure of the whole research, *interview questions* that are not the same as the research questions, and *the questions the researcher poses to the data* - that is to say how to read and use the data to answer the research questions (Hyvärinen, 2017). As the first two were described in the previous section here I outline the process of data analysis and the question(s) I posed to the data. I first approach the process of data analysis by following the guidelines proposed by Pertti Alasuutari (2011) before considering the epistemological questions of my thesis and finally presenting the analytical framework I employ in the process of data analysis.

As described in the previous section, a researcher should carefully consider what kind of data they want to collect and what will they do with it. Qualitative data is rich in manifestation and manifold and complex by nature. The researcher explores and interprets the ‘reality’ through the gathered qualitative data that exemplifies only a part of the researchable ‘world’ – in other words, the data is a sample in a certain context and a cultural frame. (Alasuutari, 2011.)

I situate my study in the realm of *social constructionism* that argues that the ways in which we generally understand the world and the categories and concepts we use are historically and culturally specific and thus reflections of prevailing socio-economic arrangements rather than objective truths (Barr, 2015, p. 4). Barr (2015, pp. 4-5, 9) states that the knowledge we possess and the ways we comprehend the world at a given time are the result of social processes and interactions between people rather than direct perceptions of reality; therefore, looking at the world from one perspective or another is always serving some interest, entailing a certain social action.

Accordingly, our material environment is shaped according to certain values and practices defined by dominant groups at a given time. The emphasis of research is thus drawn on the processes of how particular phenomena or forms of knowledge are achieved through social processes and how people together create and enact knowledge. (Barr, 2015, pp. 11-12, 44.) Therefore, it is noteworthy that the two central concepts in this research - sustainability and wellbeing - are inherently value-bound, shaped by the dominant socio-economic and political practices at a given time and space. By conducting this research, I too am inherently taking part in the process of constructing culturally and historically bound knowledge.

In this thesis I then approached the collected data from the perspective of the relational and multidimensional, needs-based Having, Doing, Loving and Being -model (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014). In summary, the dimension of Having refers to the fulfilment of material and impersonal needs. It furthermore alludes to the awareness of the limits of the planet and the optimal level of need fulfilment and likewise the ‘moderate’ use of natural resources. The dimension of Doing then encompasses the different kinds of activities people take part in. It is furthermore central to human and environmental wellbeing as the ordinary activities humans engage in differ in their environmental impacts. For its part, the dimension of Loving refers to the belonging to and caring for different spheres in life, including the natural environment and other species. It furthermore encompasses the local and global and the present and future perspectives. Finally, the dimension of Being involves different aspects of human presence, including the need for self-actualisation and personal growth, and aspects of mental and physical health. (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014.)

Subsequently, I utilised the HDLB-model as my analytical framework. According to Alasuutari (2011), qualitative analysis has two stages inseparable in practice – categorisation of observations and ‘solving the mystery’. Observations are reduced to ‘raw’ categories from the perspective of the chosen theoretical framework and the methodological approach, thus common features connected to the same phenomenon are sought from the data. Subsequently, interpretations are made that can explain the phenomenon. Observations themselves are thus not the end results, but rather clues that are interpreted in order to arrive at certain conclusions. (Alasuutari, 2011.) The purpose of the research was thus to get as close to the students’ experiences as possible and to observe and interpret the data in order to arrive at conclusions as to how university students perceive wellbeing.

First, I systematically read the transcribed data by posing the following questions according to the four thematic dimensions in the HDLB-model: 1. How do the students perceive their wellbeing in relation to material resources? 2. How do the students perceive their wellbeing in relation to the activities they are engaged in? 3. How do the students perceive their wellbeing in relation to belonging to or caring for something? and 4. How do the students perceive their wellbeing in relation to their (alert) presence and states of being?

In relation to these analytical questions, I created a list of codes based on the indicators of the different dimensions in the HDLB -model identified by Hirvilammi & Helne (2014). The thematic dimensions and their indicators were presented in Table 1 on page 23. As a result, I had 22 codes, their purpose being to aid me observe and categorise the participants’ manifold stories and to interpret the data. With these codes and the analytical questions, I went through the transcribed data in a systematic manner. I then selected all data extracts, which entailed discussion in relation to the participants’ own wellbeing and wellbeing more generally and widely, including the participants’ social surroundings and aspects of animal and planetary wellbeing. Subsequently, the questions I posed to the data were: Do new aspects of wellbeing not included in the model arise, and are certain aspects or dimensions more emphasised than others?

During the observation of data extracts, there was no need to formulate additional codes. Subsequently, I then categorised the observations based on what aspects, themes and perspectives were emphasised in the data and formulated six thematic categories: *the access to and the quality of material resources*, *purposeful and meaningful activities*, *social relations*, *the natural environment*, *self-actualisation* and *health*. The first category, *the access to and the quality of material resources*, was derived in relation to the dimension of Having. The second category, *purposeful and meaningful activities*, stemmed from the dimension of Doing. The third and fourth category, *social relations* and

the natural environment were then derived from the dimension of Loving. Finally, the fifth and sixth category, *self-actualisation* and *health*, originated from the dimension of Being. With these thematic categories I then present the central aspects arising from the data, and the perspectives, multifaceted practices and relations through which the participants perceived wellbeing. In the next chapter, I will also analyse how these categories relate to one another in the participants' perceptions and how the categories situate in relation to the four dimensions of Having, Doing, Loving and Being.

5. PERCEPTIONS OF WELLBEING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS:

Sustainable wellbeing requires both individual and systemic societal efforts

In this chapter I present central findings of the data analysis and provide answers to the research question: How do university students perceive wellbeing? First, I will give a more descriptive account of the participants' stories and how they talked about their wellbeing. Then, I continue with a more detailed analysis of the participants' perceptions of wellbeing through the thematic categories and in relation to the dimensions of Having, Doing, Loving and Being. Note, that all the presented data extracts are translated from Finnish into English and in some cases I have therefore used my own deliberation with regard to the concepts and their translations. All the used extracts are presented in their original form in the Appendix 2.

5.1. How the students talk about their wellbeing?

To begin with, the participants described their wellbeing openly and through multifaceted stories. Due to the semi-structured model of interviewing the discussions flew naturally and the purpose of the dialogue was to enable the participants to express themselves as openly as possible. Some participants were wondering though whether they were saying the 'right things' and one furthermore mentioned it was hard to give an answer to 'such big questions'. A few participants were also thinking they might have forgotten to tell something essential or mention a certain aspect. Interestingly, one was also surprised of the things he brought up in the interview.

First, when asked to describe situations when the participants felt well, some took a more detailed while others a more holistic approach. A few started to make lists of all the things that influenced their wellbeing, some started to describe a particular situation such as 'being at home at ease', exercising or being with friends, while some started from the big picture and described wellbeing as a process or 'an entity'. As one put it, 'initially I feel well all the time'. Only one participant started from the perspective of an 'absence' and here it was the absence of stress that would enable her to be well.

When asked to describe situations or things that affected the participants' wellbeing negatively, the participants brought to the fore situations and things one could not do much about. Usually it was the stress from studies and the hurried periods of life that came with it. These aspects also extended their negative influence on other areas and the participants' functioning in life. The participants' stories

also reflected certain stages of their lives as some of them were doing their undergraduate studies and some were already closer to finishing their master's studies. As one participant put it, how one perceives wellbeing is 'tied to a specific time and place'.

Accordingly, some of the participants considered their wellbeing as a journey consisting of different phases and something that is prone to change during their lifespan or 'growth'. Interestingly, a couple of the participants had furthermore somewhat philosophical approach in their stories when it came to their being and living in the world. One was pondering 'what is all this' and what is the deeper meaning in life. Then again, one participant did not believe in 'absolute free will' as we are born in a certain historical time and place, although an individual has possibilities to influence one's life to some extent.

The stories thus included different time perspectives. Some discussed their childhood times that have had effect on their current being, and often the stories included also considerations over their future. These considerations included wishes and aspirations regarding their own life, but also worries about the global future. Two participants also discussed wider societal and global concerns of the time that caused disconcertment such as the upsurge of street patrols due to the increase of asylum seekers in Finland, and the war in Syria. The participants' stories were thus manifold, and they reflected both their own lives and wider societal and global realities of the time. Next, I will provide a more detailed scrutiny of the participants' perceptions of wellbeing.

5.2. The access to and the quality of material resources create the foundation for wellbeing

In this sub-section I present findings in relation to the dimension of Having that comprises of a decent and fair standard of living and refers to the fulfilment of material and impersonal needs. In this study the fulfilment of material needs was regarded the foundation for wellbeing and the participants perceived their wellbeing particularly through the quality of their material resources and the ability to make decisions regarding them according to their wants, needs, preferences and values. The participants thus perceived *the access to and the quality of material resources* in relation to their personal wellbeing, but also in relation to animal and ecological wellbeing. Despite being able to make informed decisions in relation to their material resources, it did not sometimes extend to the participants' behaviour and certain barriers to more sustainable living were identified. Here, three

central aspects pertaining to this thematic category according to the participants' perceptions are analysed: the role of basic (physiological) needs, dietary choices, and accommodation choices.

When asked when the participants feel well or what kind of things affect their wellbeing positively or negatively, the majority of the participants mentioned the role of basic physiological needs that form the basis of their wellbeing. Rather than describing wellbeing deficits in these areas, the focus in the participants' lives was more on *the quality* of the material resources, particularly regarding food consumption. The participants made oftentimes decisions based on their knowledge or what is considered 'preferable', such as choosing domestic products or foods with high nutritional value. Overall, the participants were able to make choices according to their wants, needs and preferences as described in the extracts below.

Extract 1

P7: "Yeah, like basically just the basic needs, rest, exercise and food, or like it feels they are always mentioned everywhere, but I must again admit that it's true, because they really affect so much of wellbeing, that you get enough sleep and can really eat healthy and nutritious food."

Extract 2

P1: "And also all the basic need have to of course be fulfilled, you should have slept enough, you have to have food that you like, you shouldn't have too much stress from school or work. They always limit what you then can (do), that you can fully focus on what you do at that moment. (...) even though I always try to deny it, since a young age and defy it, but like a healthy diet for example is the basis of wellbeing... that you eat healthily and well, eat preferably like Finnish products, because here they do not use GMO and the food here is of high quality..."

Similarly, when asked what any person should have in their life to be well the fulfilment of physiological needs were again the starting point. Some of the participants made comparisons with richer and poorer countries in their stories and emphasised how the fulfilment of basic material needs form the basis for consideration and development of wellbeing in a broader sense. Yet, as one participant commented, it can be difficult to determine what a person needs if one has not lived in such need.

Extract 3

P7: “Ok, when these basic needs are fulfilled, oh no this is starting to sounds exactly like the hierarchy of needs by Maslow, but like I must probably admit that it has some truth to it because when the physiological needs are fulfilled so then it would be good to also think what kind of content a person needs in their life (...).”

Extract 4

P5: “(...) that like if you for example have serious financial problems you are not very well in any other areas (...).”

Extract 5

P1: “So, like, when I have not lived in such need I cannot really say what kind of things a person really needs.”

According to the participants’ perceptions, living in a welfare state enabled the fulfilment of basic physiological needs rather easily and as students they had not experienced serious problems regarding their material resources. When describing her financial situation, one participant even used a word ‘privileged’ even though statistically she was living under the poverty line. This perception relates to what some other participants also brought to the fore; sometimes the other more ‘well-off’ spheres of life can compensate for temporary lows.

Extract 6

P7: “(...) well now that we live in like welfare society so at least the fulfilment of basic needs is very easy because you have money to buy food and clothes and so on (...).”

Extract 7

P2: “(...) I am like privileged, that I am a student in a higher education and I have a steady financial situation, so I do not, I do not have stress in that respect, that with those measures I am well, even though I am basically living below the poverty line and so on.”

It is noteworthy that Finnish university students are eligible for free education and can apply for financial aid including a study grant and a state guarantee for a student loan; in addition, a housing

supplement can be applied (Kela, n.d.). It could thus be said that rather than perceiving material resources from the perspective of wealth as a particularly determinant factor, the participants gave the material and impersonal resources a contributory value in their wellbeing.

Then again, from the perspective of natural resources the role of dietary choices was discussed in various connections. The majority of the participants mentioned they preferred to choose vegetarian options when possible and to some it had become a habit. The main aspects behind these decisions or preferences were ethical reasons and the sense of control – to be able to make informed choices based on one's values, particularly from the perspective of animal welfare.

Extract 8

P4: “And food – I am like kind of strict, that if I cannot eat how I want and when I want so that will cause like irritation and ill-being. (...) I am basically a vegetarian, ovo-lacto, but like, but like when necessary I do eat meat and especially fish – during travels I eat when the situation requires.”

I: Is it for ethical reasons or what for?

P4: “Well, I have started very young, maybe 13, when I stopped eating meat so in that sense it is perhaps a habit, but originally for ethical reasons.”

One participant who used to be a vegetarian stated how the (negative) news of the time were influencing her dietary choices and the participant contemplated on a trade-off regarding what is ethical and sustainable consumption. To another participant, the decision had been more definite and he had been a vegan for 12 years.

Extract 9

P3. “I used to be a vegetarian and sometimes I still do have moments that I mostly eat vegetarian food (...).”

I: Is it for ethical reasons or what for?

P3: “It is for ethical reasons, because I do not like intensive production and how animals are treated and especially now that the news are covering stories about those slaughter houses so you are over and over again appalled by how animals are treated, and I am rather, I'll rather dissociate from it and eat tofu, even though it would be transported from the other side of the world but at least it has not tortured anybody.”

Extract 10

P5: “Those are like technical things like eating and sleeping, that you can kind of feel you have control over them.”

I: How do you feel animals affect your wellbeing, you are vegan for ethical reasons?

P5: “Yes, for ethical reasons... That like when you begin to understand that, that what is been done to animals that like a pack of mincemeat arrives to a market, so it did not take long to think about the chances in my own life (style).”

From the perspective of sustainable wellbeing human, animal and planetary wellbeing are intertwined. According to Springmann et al. (2018) the food system has manifold influences from pollution and ecosystem depletion to climate change. The researchers (2018) thus estimate that due to the expected changes and growth in population and wealth between 2010 and 2050, the environmental effects of the food system could increase by 50-90%, going beyond the planetary boundaries defining a safe operating space for humanity. As one of the solutions Springmann et al. (2018) thus emphasise the role of dietary changes towards healthier plant-based diets. Here, some of the participants perceived that the teachings of sustainable development and research knowledge had furthermore enforced their values, also when it came to their dietary choices.

Extract 11

P7: “But like now that my flexitarian diet is in line with for example teachings of sustainable development so it somehow gives me a good feeling because I act according to my own values and I feel in a way that it is also scientifically reasonable and so on.”

Though, some participants described a sense of conflict in their behaviour. Sometimes wants, feelings and situations directed their dietary choices rather than their ‘better knowledge’ or aspirations to make better decisions. These commentaries therefore alluded to a more hedonic behaviour and acting on the basis of one’s preferences. These decisions were then evaluated in relation to their own wellbeing but also in the global context. Meat-eating was perceived particularly problematic for an individual but also for our ecosystem.

Extract 12

P6: “Tuesday actually, Tuesday is the world’s hardest day at school and I go to the market and I am so hungry, so I buy a salmon, and I think that salmon is so good I need comfort-salmon, so then I bought it and it was OK. Then I felt better for a while.”

P6: “I am a meat-eater, I am not really proud of it, I have tried to cut down, but I am bit of a hardened meat-eater, but I do know it is not really wise for our ecosystem (...) it is for me one of those things I need to change, even the sort of attitude that we cannot eat so much meat we do now. Also globally. (...) so I do think that if I have balance in it like a sort of also nature respecting diet, so it would be refreshing in a sense that I wouldn’t feel so stuffy or at least that’s what I imagine.”

Extract 13

P2: “(...) maybe I have had some vacillating for example with meat eating... and that... I am not like eating a lot of meat, well now that I eat quite often here at school so it doesn’t always affect, that I might for example choose from the two to three dishes available, so if the vegetarian one is not appetising then I take some meat option, but like, I do think that it is for sure the thing that should change in a way...”

The extent of one’s daily choices can often be difficult to grasp and place in a global context; though, dietary choices are model examples of individual choices that can have longstanding societal effects (Pekkarinen & Myllyniemi, 2018, p. 35). For instance, a shift towards vegetarianism has been regarded an essential step towards a sustainable society (Salonen & Helne, 2012; Helne et al., 2012). Even though no straightforward interpretations can be made here on the participants’ use of natural resources, the stories do show that the participants often considered the extent of their choices.

In the study on Finnish students of applied sciences (n=210) (previously referred to with Salonen & Åhlberg, 2012) the participants were asked to assess 36 aspects of sustainable development with an eight-step scale and to provide comments to their assessments. The study showed that the students were in the process of adopting a more sustainable way of food consumption, but two barriers were identified in the process: social groups (or factors) and habits. As a whole, the importance of vegetarian diets was rated lower than any other item in the research, however, the feasibility of the diets was regarded relatively good. (Salonen & Helne, 2012.)

Similar barriers were visible here, particularly when it came to the role of habits and how the participants made dietary choices on daily basis. In their study Salonen & Helne (2012) raised the

question over possible lack of knowledge regarding the prerequisites of sustainable development and emphasised how behavioural change can be supported by education to show that human health, environment, global food security and animal welfare are linked and correlative. In this research the participants seemed to be aware of some of the benefits of vegetarian diets particularly for their personal health and in the context of animal welfare and sustainability. Moreover, they seemed rather able to make informed decisions at least for the most part. Though, it should be noted that *knowledge* is a complex concept, particularly when sustainable development itself is regarded such a multifaceted, abstract and value-bound conceptualisation. Therefore, the role of education and learning in the participants' stories is covered in the next sub-section of the findings in more detail.

Then again, in the context of material resources housing and accommodation choices were talked about to a lesser extent. Rather than stating financial reasons, other aspects such as social relations and location were given greater emphasis when choosing appropriate accommodation.

Extract 14

P5: “(...) so to the current one I moved only because I went to study and then had to move from the place that cost closer to 600€ per month to a cheaper place so, but to me it was clear that when I move out of that one it will be like a commune because it is important to me that a home feels like home when there are people there (...).”

On the other hand, some participants perceived for example the city centres off-putting due to constant noise, traffic and lack of green space, and preferred to live further away at this point of their lives. Some perceptions included thus a sense of compromise – one cannot always have it all, for example access to resources and services, quiet living as well as green space. Hämäläinen (2013) notes that the design of our physical living environments is a crucial determinant of sustainable wellbeing and affects our everyday lives. Today's advanced and complex societies cause increasing mental burden to which natural environment is a quintessential counterforce. Several studies have shown that nature has positive effects on both health and subjective wellbeing; in addition, the built environment can support psychological and social wellbeing by enabling social interaction in public places such as parks and by minimising mental dissonance. (Hämäläinen, 2013, p. 16.) Accordingly, the role of housing policies and urban planning were too considered as examples of how the society can support the development of wellbeing both in an environmental and social perspective.

Extract 15

P7: “(...) so it would be good that the society offers that kind of possibilities to produce wellbeing like what they do nowadays with housing policies so that it is really thought about where to build the houses and what way, so that neighbours are in interaction and like all those recreational areas so it is in that way important so that the surroundings support then the sort of development of wellbeing.”

5.3. Purposeful and meaningful activities support the process of well-becoming

In this sub-section I present findings in relation to the dimension of Doing that comprises of purposeful and responsible activities and refers to the different kinds of activities a person is engaged in. Regarding the activities the participants were engaged in, the activities supported the process of well-becoming and they often reflected the participants' sense of autonomy, fulfilment of potentials and pursuit of self-actualisation. Therefore, the participants perceived their *purposeful and meaningful activities* in relation to their own wellbeing, but additionally in relation to their social and natural surroundings and in the context of planetary wellbeing. According to the participants' perceptions, the following kinds of activities are analysed in relation to this thematic category: leisure time and nature activities, education and learning, and social and political activities with future employment (prospects). Central in this category was learning and the accumulation of knowledge, and how the participants' values were reflected in their behaviour and enhanced through multifaceted practices.

Several participants described leisure time activities they regularly engaged in such as physical exercises and other purposeful activities that produced wellbeing to them. Again, financial means were not perceived as a particularly determinant factor with regard to leisure time activities and were rather given a contributory value. Therefore, some preferred activities such as travels abroad were actualised when finances enabled it. However, none of the participants that enjoyed travelling abroad questioned how (un)sustainable their preferred leisure time activities were. Then again, the sense of meaningfulness and accomplishment seemed important and the two went often hand in hand in the participants' stories. The activities described by the participants seemed also to have a balancing effect whether the activity was reading, a practice of mindfulness, a straining physical activity or the search for an 'adventure'.

Extract 16

P4: “(...) maybe a sort of progressive thinking characteristic to our culture, that like a sense of accomplishment has to do with it too, that it feels like you are feeling well, because if I think about horseback riding and why I feel like that so that is it, that for a moment you manage to do something difficult and then you can be proud by yourself.”

Extract 17

P5: “And well, another thing if I think about it, another category is probably exercise. The good feeling from exercise that I can take long bike rides, go to the gym, do yoga or go running so that give you like a clear and refreshing feeling. Then maybe third is, I aim to do every day a sort of... a sort of mindfulness type of formal exercise, so that, the balanced feeling I get from it is like really important.”

Thus, it was perceived important to be able to engage in activities that are both *meaningful* and *purposeful*, emphasising also the participants’ sense of autonomy. Oftentimes the described activities involved also a social dimension, and the sense the meaningfulness was derived through social activities or doing meaningful things together with friends such as planning ‘breakaways’ to detach oneself from weekdays. In some cases, the activities implied also a sense of hedonic pleasure-seeking and pursuing of one’s wants.

Extract 18

P1: “What is stopping anybody from doing things, everybody can do if they want to. But for me it’s like really important that we do a lot of different things, climb some roof and do all kinds of cool things. I would like to do a skydiving jump and things like that – like adventure is maybe the thing that keeps me alive the most.”

In addition, nature activities were mentioned frequently. According to a case study in Helsinki (n=367)⁷, both a decent amount of green areas and accessibility (for example short distance) to a natural environment increased the citizens’ number of visits to a green environment. In the case study, 97% of the participants engaged in an outdoor recreation during the year. (Neuvonen, Sievänen, Tönnés & Koskela, 2007.)

Here, some participants sought opportunities to go wander in nature more often, others went rarely or did not actively seek the opportunity. In some of the stories living in a city centre and the aspects

⁷ The survey study was conducted between 1998 and 2000 on Finnish citizens living in Helsinki aged 15 to 74.

of accessibility were mentioned as hindering factors in engagement with nature activities. The acknowledgement of the benefits of nature was though actively present in the participants' stories. In one hand, the search for peace, tranquillity and other realised mental and physical benefits drove some of the participants to go wander in nature. It could thus be said the participants perceived 'nature' as an enabling environment or sphere to actualise certain needs as described in the following extracts.

Extract 19

P4: "Then, also like walking and things like that, even though it wouldn't be exercising, but like being free and being outside."

I: Out in the nature or just being outdoors in general?

P4: "In the nature if possible, but I live in city centre, so I don't go often that far, but anyway outdoors. And I do horseback riding so that is also sort of exercise outdoors as well, that is really empowering."

Extract 20

P7: "(...) I am like a peace-loving person so then nature is like a really important element and also in that respect that nature provides so much more than just mental wellbeing, because you get berries and mushrooms that on the other hand support my physical wellbeing through food and vitamins and so forth. So nature is like really really important."

On the other hand, even though certain benefits of nature such as relaxation and lower stress-hormones were acknowledged it did not seemingly increase the times some participants spent in nature. One participant even used the word 'alienated' when describing his nature-relationship at the time. The following extracts were interesting as they highlighted the two ends of the spectrum of how natural environment can be experienced and perceived: the other participant described the close vicinity of natural environment in the city and how it enhances wellbeing, while the other described himself as a 'city person' who does not like to be in nature – thus, being one time in Lapland 'away from civilisation' caused him ill-being.

Extract 21

P5: "Yes, well, it first of all clearly relaxes that like when you go, it doesn't have to be any rain forest, going to Pyynikki is enough, that you notice there that even though you

hear the traffic noise so that, being in any kind of nature it lower stress hormones and gives you a sort of more relaxed feel.”

P5: “(...) I mean, for me it is important to be close to nature, but it doesn’t show in my behaviour, that I rarely go wander anywhere in nature, but the couple of times I get there, why don’t I do this more often, but you just kind of don’t.”

Extract 22

P2: “(...) well I feel like I am maybe alienated from nature in a way, that... that I don’t really like being in nature, or maybe it is a relationship I would like to deepen... that I am such a city person and ... I know myself that if I’m ... like a couple of years ago I went to Lapland to hike with a friend for a couple of days, like five days, I kind of got really restless and even get a little bit of anxiety, that I am like away from civilisation or something, it is a strange feeling, but it sort of gives me anxiety.”

With regard to purposeful and meaningful activities, education and learning was another central and discussed theme. Education played a central part in the students’ wellbeing and was perceived to have cumulative and long-standing effects in the participants’ lives. Learning was perceived rewarding also from the perspective of future employment.

Extract 23

I: What meaning do you give to education in growing as a person, or otherwise in life?

P5: “(...) well it nowadays feels like that the more I have studied the greater the meaning has become, like, now that I have started to work on my master’s thesis it has been really pleasurable, that is really rewarding that you generally learn new, that you find in you that you learn those skills that you may one day eventually even use in the working life, so that is a really big deal (...). And as a whole it feels like that to have gotten into university to be able to study here is a really big thing for my own wellbeing, to have that sort of direction and something like interesting to do.”

It could be said that education and learning furthermore emphasised the participants’ sense of autonomy, fulfilment of potentials and pursuit of self-actualisation. University studies gave the participants direction in life, provided (needed) knowledge and to some extent affirmed their values in life. This affirmation was additionally associated with increased mental wellbeing.

Extract 24

P7: “(...) that for me like university studies have like given so much knowledge, that it has at the same time increased my mental wellbeing, because I have in a way been able to act in my own life in such a way that I somehow feel that it is right or in a way in line with research knowledge.”

One participant furthermore expressed that people in general should have access to information about wellbeing and how to produce it, and how an ideal society would encourage and direct its citizens towards producing wellbeing for example through education.

Extract 25

P7: “Well maybe this has to do with also education but mainly that people should have access to information about wellbeing and things that produce wellbeing, and in a way it would be wonderful to have such a society that encourages and directs towards producing wellbeing, though for sure there are perhaps many different interpretations of wellbeing, but like education is probably one that a consensus prevails that this is a good thing (...).”

Related to the theme of education and learning the role of social and political action was present in almost all the participants’ stories. Only one participant described to have done voluntary and humanitarian work abroad, and it was particularly due to the ‘need of change’ and the thrill of new experiences. The majority of the participants had then engaged in different kinds of voluntary works in their own surroundings depending on their resources and particularly available time.

Extract 26

P8: “Well yes, I have been involved in many things, well it is always of course a question of time (...) I have worked in many organisations, or as a volunteer in the Finnish Red Cross and there been working in a hospital and been in the operation of Grief Ribbon (...).”

The participants’ activities ranged from working with people in local associations and organisations to activities dealing with animal welfare. As one described her occasional activities in a youth organisation, ‘the idea is to do good things in your own community’. In many respects it could be said that the participants’ values and interests were reflected in their behaviour and engagement with

activities meaningful to them as illustrated in the extracts below. The role of knowledge and learning was furthermore highlighted in the process as a self-reinforcing aspect.

Extract 27

P5: “(...) actually now that we started to talk about animals, so overall that can, like meaningful action, that I have tried to re-activate myself a bit in like an organisation after a long time, so that it like, that like clearly, that I can act according to my own values or that I can perhaps maybe influence things so that is like important.”

I: What organisation are you in?

P5: “Well I try to re-active again in like the Justice for Animals -group (...) in Tampere at university we have the University of Tampere vegan -organisation (...).”

Extract 28

P7: “(...) well like three years ago I got to know the Pirkanmaa Animal Welfare Association and their operation and I joined as a temporary home (...) so in a way through that too I have gotten a lot knowledge about animals and like even though the operation of the association focuses on pets for the most part, we also talk a lot about animal relationship overall and like the appreciation of all animals, which like connects really well with like social sciences and especially like feminist theories and like sustainable development (...).”

Some participants furthermore talked about their future employment prospects and wishes, particularly in the humanitarian field. According to the data extracts, the focus was specifically on *meaningful* and *responsible* employment in which the participants could work for the wellbeing of others and, as one described it, ‘make a better life that constructs and not destroys’.

Extract 29

I: You mentioned something, that you would like to work in the field of development cooperation – so what interests you?

P3: “Yea. Well, I would be interested, or that I dream about a job in the Finnish Red Cross, or with Red Cross somewhere else in the world (...) or then somewhere like the Foreign Ministry or... somewhere, where I could work with development aid.”

Extract 30

P8: “(...) and I see it very meaningful also the job, that you get yourself a job with which you can do better and, make a better life that constructs and not destroys (...) I would like to be for instance a publicist in some non-profit humanitarian organisation or work, talk to those people, with people’s mouths who do not have the possibility to do so, or research those things that you think that come for granted.”

It thus seems that the social and political action the participants were engaged in furthermore enforced their values and seemed to increase interest towards certain fields of employment. Though it cannot be said which came first, interest in a certain field of employment or engagement with the mentioned activity. Overall, the participants then seemed to be in a quite a good position with regard to actualising their needs of doing by engaging in purposeful and meaningful activities.

In addition, from the perspective of accomplishment and self-development, the aspect of *learning* appeared to be quite an essential one in the participants’ perceptions of wellbeing. The importance of individual and cultural lifelong learning has also been stressed by Salonen & Helne (2012). According to their study (2012), the students were already questioning their eating habits and this questioning has been suggested to be a factor that can contribute to social change: the same students are the consumers, parents and decision-makers of tomorrow.

It has been noted that education and lifelong learning can have a crucial role in the transformation towards more environmentally sustainable societies. To tackle the challenges of the 21st Century, Goleman, Bennet & Barlow (2012, p. 2) have emphasised the role of *ecoliteracy* - the integration of *emotional, social and ecological intelligence* in education; the researchers consider all three dimensions essential to human intelligence and all three being in a dynamic relationship with each other. Education can shape values, worldviews and behaviour while it also adds to the development of competencies, skills, concepts and ways to influence unsustainable practices and build resilience (Wals & Benavot, 2017). Wals & Benavot (2017, p. 407) thus depict two complementary ways of education⁸: *the instrumental approach* and *emancipatory approach*. Whereas the first refers to the aim to develop specific behaviour deemed right and necessary, the latter aims to develop responsible and reflective citizens.

⁸ Here, education refers to all kinds of formal or informal education or training in the public, private and community sectors.

To some extent the ‘transformative power’ of education and learning was also evident here in the participants’ perceptions in both respects: through studies on sustainability and through developing critical and reflective thinking. To put in other words, the participants had learned through their studies, but also through personal experiences, and thus used this gained knowledge to reflect on, adjust and direct their behaviour.

5.4. Well-becoming requires a sense of belonging and caring for social relations and the natural environment

In this sub-section I present findings in relation to the dimension of Loving that comprises of connective and compassionate relations to others and refers to the belonging to certain spheres and caring for certain things in life. Regarding belonging and caring, the participants perceived wellbeing particularly through their *social relations* and *the natural environment*. The participants perceived social relations fundamental for their personal wellbeing but also for everyone’s wellbeing. For their part, the role of natural environment and the human-nature relationship were often perceived in the context of global concerns and sustainability. According to the participants’ perceptions, three central aspects pertaining to these thematic categories are overviewed: the role of social relations, global community and future, and nature and species. According to their perceptions, the perspective of *relationality* was central both with regard to the social relations but also with the surrounding world: our relations are often interconnected and interdependent. Thus, the human-nature relationship was regarded complex and multifaceted both in a personal and a global perspective.

To start with, the role and quality of social relations was central in a both positive and negative sense. The topic was approached from developing as a person and having a good and reciprocal connection with others, but also through the experiences of loneliness and losses of important people. For several participants family was perceived as a supporting ‘unit’ and in many of the discussions the role of close friends was more emphasised - these relationships were perceived reciprocal and mutually supportive. Overall, the realm of social relations was perceived *fundamental* for human wellbeing: a person should have a social connection to something whether it is family or friends or possibly something else in life. Hence, it was perceived important to feel accepted and have a sense of belonging in one’s social surroundings. Some participants made also value judgements regarding their social relations and their importance in and for their wellbeing and lives altogether. It was

furthermore stressed that people are constantly in contact with other people, emphasising our relationality.

Extract 31

P4: “(...) that if I did not have a family or friends then where would I get wellbeing (...). So maybe if I had to be totally alone for a long time so it could be quite bad for my wellbeing.”

Extract 32

P7: “(...) even though like health is really important I think maybe those people close to you are more important, at least to me.”

Extract 33

P5: “Well, at least like, that you feel yourself accepted and loved and so on, that you have meaningful relationships and you belong to something. (...) it is like one of the most important things if life, that like, that for me it’s altogether awesome that you create a connection to a person, so that is definitely one of the important if not the most important thing for my wellbeing.”

Extract 34

P8: “(...) we are social animals (...) we constantly have to act with other people and I don’t, I do not know whether, could anyone cope totally alone in this world. For me friends, pals and close ones, family plus other people I randomly meet are really important (...).”

The role of social relations was perceived all-encompassing in a sense that the past and present relations affect all other aspects of life, too. Couple participants referred to past experiences and reflected on them as they had experienced death in the family, losses of friends and depression/anxiety and these experiences had left a mark on their lives. As illustrated below, the relation to oneself and how to deal with those negative and difficult aspects was thus perceived important in order to move on in life. These aspects are also discussed further in the next sub-section from the perspective of self-actualisation and well-becoming.

Extract 35

P2: “(...) like it has to do with when you were younger and was somehow self-centred, or a depressed person is easily that, or in my opinion is quite self-centred, maybe it all revolves around in a way, and you don’t understand yourself like... maybe you don’t like understand all those connections or how like together we are here, or like, how significant you are, when on the other hand you are, we are completely like insignificant.”

Extract 36

P8: “(...) when I talked about those lows I really mean concretely very terrible lows, then to lose a mother was to me it, that I really didn’t think I could ever feel well after that. And... I have also lost very good friends on the way even though I am only 24 so it feels that I have had like already enough losses for one lifetime – then I have experienced that it has nothing to do with being well at that time.”

In a larger perspective, the topic of global community and future was approached with a concern but furthermore with a sense of hope. The participants’ perceptions were in some cases reflected on the global reality for example through a participant’s own carbon footprint and in the context of sustainable development.

Extract 37

P3: “I have always been a supporter of sustainable development and really wanted to recycle everything and leave behind, or it would be nice to leave behind a smallest possible carbon footprint and... and like, I do have gotten a sense of hope during those courses that maybe this world is not completely beyond repair.”

As mentioned in the earlier sub-sections, the participants were aware of the issues related to sustainability particularly through their studies and expressed apprehension regarding the global reality. Some of the mentioned concerns included the high level of people living in slavery, population growth and energy crisis, unequally divided resources and wealth and the state of the environment. The participants perceived how their wellbeing is furthermore dependent on this larger perspective.

Extract 38

P1: “(...) our wellbeing cannot be dependent on the other people’s illbeing... it is not sustainable.”

Extract 39

P5: “But then those things that you have no control over like you can have crisis in your relationships or you start to worry about the situation of world politics, or the environment and so on, so that takes away my wellbeing.”

In the participants’ perceptions of wellbeing, there was a sense of hope but a clear message that actions are needed on a higher than individual level. As one participant put it, ‘I long for a softer society’ and some of the participants mentioned how it is important that sustainability issues are being talked about and researched. Therefore, in many of the stories the global responsibility and the will to act were emphasised in order to build a more socio-politically, economically and ecologically sustainable world before it is too late.

Extract 40

P8: “Many things worry me, but in fact I am happier that it (sustainability) has started to be researched systematically and it is being talked about and... consciousness is spreading and so on. Well I am of course worried about the climate and a big problem is that here the resources are so unequally distributed (...) and we would have the possibilities to resolve child mortal- or like global famine, but there is no will for that. So I think it is sickening and then I am worried about it and, well, it influences my wellbeing negatively.”

P8: “(...) like I would want that we have nature also in the future to enjoy... that we would not rape the Earth so much as we have done now. But sure, such big things that it requires a lot, but I do not see it like impossible.”

Extract 41

P1: “(...) And, well like we have talked about in our studies that it could well be that the Earth does not need as humans, but we humans need the Earth, and if us people harm the planet too much it will eventually brush us off and carries on its own life, it carries on like nothing has happened (...).”

It seems that the participants perceived themselves as a part of the problem but also as a part of the solution as individual consumers, citizens and future professionals. From the perspective of sustainability some participants therefore contemplated on their own possibilities to influence our global future.

Extract 42

P1: “I feel like, that I can in the business world bring something positive as it is usually seen as very negative (...) I want, that us as western consumers can act in a more sustainable manner and not then exploit some others.”

The role of other species and nature was also discussed in relation to the global concerns. As I have already scrutinised the human-nature relations to some extent, I will examine here only the care aspects and how the participants perceived their *relationship* with nature: some participants described a closer affiliation and connection with nature, some described a changed or transformed relation and one approached the relation to nature through God.

To some it was important to have a close nature relation, though some of these participants did not actively search the connection for example by engaging in nature activities. It was furthermore stated that in Finland it is rather easy to have a connection to nature and overall to have clean natural environment around. In addition to the benefits already expressed with regard to nature activities, one participant perceived to be also more in touch with his emotions when surrounded by natural environment. On the other hand, some of the participants described how their relation had changed through time or how it was now different compared to childhood. As one participant described it, she now knew how to appreciate nature better, but also to utilise it for her own wellbeing.

Extract 43

P7: “(...) nature has always been an important element to me, but maybe it has somehow changed through age periods or like when as a kid I played in some ditch with some mud whereas now I know how to appreciate nature more widely and to like make use of it in a sense that you can get natural products that you can then utilise for your wellbeing (unclear audio).”

On the contrary, one participant used the word ‘alienated’ when describing his affiliation with nature and acknowledged how self-destructively the humankind works in perceiving us separate from everything else. It could be said that this view emphasises the understanding of and *the need* for a more *relational* perception with regard to humankind and our surroundings.

Extract 44

P2: “Well, like I just used the word alienated, so maybe I am like sort of, or when I talk about that I want to go towards a point in my life, and if I am like, I have a reasonable

attitude towards life and things, so, then if I scrutinise it as a whole how like people, the humankind works, we do not act like, we are acting badly and in a way self-destructively, too. And like then we see each other separate from everything, everything else.”

Then again, one participant had developed her relation to nature through personal faith and nowadays perceived conservation of nature more important than before.

Extract 45

P1: “(...) I once read a sentence, I have no recollection where I read it from, but I read that conservation of nature is respecting God. It stopped me and I started to think could it be, and then, when I thought and thought about it I came to the conclusion that yes actually it is, so after that it has been closer to my heart (...).”

Thus, it seems that to some extent nature was again perceived as an enabling environment or sphere to actualise certain needs; rather than being given intrinsic value or respect as it is, nature or species were often times perceived in relation to the participants’ own wellbeing in a sense that something ‘good’ can be gained from it: peace of mind, health benefits, nourishment and a sphere for certain activities. To put it in other words, ‘nature’ was in some measure given instrumental value in the participants’ perceptions of wellbeing.

5.5. Where it all comes together: the sphere of self-actualisation and the role of health in well-becoming

In this sub-section I present findings in relation to the dimension of Being that represents the elements of *alert presence* and refers to the different elements and states of being. In this study, the participants perceived wellbeing through the thematic categories of *self-actualisation* and *health*. Wellbeing was seen and perceived as a process of self-actualisation in which the role of mental growth, self-development, continuous learning and meaningful being were emphasised, thus bringing attention to the participants’ potentials and capacities to pursue well-becoming. Moreover, health was an aspect that permeated all the other categories - resources, activities, relations and self-actualisation. Therefore, the aspects scrutinised here link closely with the other dimensions and already overviewed themes.

When talking about wellbeing and well-becoming many of the participants perceived their wellbeing as *a process*. Some mentioned how the ups and downs are a part of life, and during difficult times the others, more well-balanced spheres of life can compensate for temporary lows. It was also mentioned to trust oneself and trust ‘the process’ even in times of adversity. It also seems that through their own experiences many participants had built their resilience and developed both their thinking and behaviour on the road to well-becoming. Several participants mentioned the role of mental growth, self-development and continuous learning that played a central part in the process. The element of self-development was also mentioned in relation to building a better world for future generations and how collective thinking should be preferred in the process as our actions influence other people, too.

The role of mental growth, self-reflection and self-development were approached from many directions and discussed in various connections. According to the participants’ perceptions of their wellbeing, the sphere of doing linked closely with the sphere of being. To start with, the role of education and learning was central in all of the participants’ descriptions. Being able to study on a university level was linked to both fulfilling potentials, being able to influence the direction of their lives and finding a deeper meaning in life. According to several participants, university studies increased their wellbeing additionally by enabling experiences of wholeness, aliveness and self-sufficiency.

Extract 46

I: How do you feel growing as a person or mental growth has to do with your wellbeing?

P6: “For me it is a big deal, especially now what I started at university and I used to work before this, so it felt like I got dumber in the previous school and at my job and for me it has been a big deal to be have gotten into here to actually study things.”

P6: “I do feel... to me it is really satisfying, that I somehow, it is hard to explain... or that I enjoy it that I kind of know things and like things, so it has been sort of big. And maybe my goal is to, that like I know in a way a lot of things so in that sense I am perhaps maybe of use to others or that because I have this kind of a background in the studies, so it is kind of driving me forward.”

The role of leisure and social and political activities were furthermore demonstrations of the participants’ potentials and the sense of autonomy. The described activities had elements of

meaningfulness and accomplishment, and particularly the social and political activities included aspirations to do good for others, too.

Extract 47

P8: “(...) when I feel that I have done something reasonable, that I can live with my choices, so then I, or if I have managed to have done something good concretely like voluntary work or have done well in a project or learned a new thing, that increases my wellbeing.”

Overall, the leisure time activities described by the participants seemed to have a balancing effect regardless of the activity. One participant described also a daily meditational practice that included an element of self-reflection, in addition to the development of a caring and accepting attitude towards self and others. Some of the other participants expressed also similar attitudes, but without specific practices. Accordingly, several participants described how their thinking had changed and advanced through the years and stance towards self and the surrounding world had evolved. To some it had been the result of systematic effort – how to be well with yourself and with others.

A couple of the participants perceived religion or the reliance on higher power a central part of their being. Reliance on higher power or religiousness provided safety but was also visible in more tangible ways for example through guidance in life. One participant described how she did not have to be afraid in life as she could put her trust in higher power: to be able to put one's life in 'bigger hands' enabled the participant to be more stress-free and, in her words, enabled the participant to live 'a prosperous life'. Accordingly, another participant perceived religion as a 'great source of wellbeing'. The participant described how religion can in a sense improve mental growth and becoming a better person as it encourages to love one another and to do good things to other people. The participant perceived Christianity as 'finding your place in the world'; reading the Bible provided the participant guidance for secular life and hope for the future as eternal life after death is possible. The participant described that by following the rules provided by the Bible she could also 'cultivate wellbeing' to others by having a godchild, by supporting missionary work and through own personal relationships by praying for her friends who sought help during difficult times.

The aspects of *health* were also an integral part of the process of well-becoming. In the participants' stories, the elements of both physical and mental health were addressed in all the categories. Physical health was discussed particularly in relation to the use of natural resources and the activities the participants were engaged in. These aspects the participants could influence according to their wants

and needs. On the other hand, the role of mental health was more complex and multifaceted. The increasing mental burden of students since the year 2000 has been identified for instance in a national survey among Finnish university students in 2016⁹. Reasons for this are suggested to be manifold from deficits in economic livelihood and social relations to difficulties to progress in studies. (Kunttu, Pesonen & Saari, 2017, pp. 83, 122)

Even though several of the participants in this study mentioned the role of stress as a negative factor in their lives, they seemed to be able to handle the stressful times and compensate the temporary lows at the time. Some of the participants also described previous difficult and far-reaching periods of their lives that had influenced their being and mental health. In addition, the social dimension of one's life played a central part in the participants' lives as their relations were often perceived interconnected and interdependent. Various previous studies have thus acknowledged the positive influence of close and reciprocal social relations to students' study performance and better mental wellbeing (see Kunttu, Pesonen & Saari, 2017, p. 112). However, no conclusions can be made here of the connections of study performance and social relations. Nevertheless, despite experiencing smaller but also greater adversities in their lives the participants had developed their thinking and furthermore engaged in activities that supported the development of their mental wellbeing and mental growth, too.

In summary, it has been suggested that wellbeing depends on the possibilities people have to adequately actualise their *deficiency needs* with the help of different goods, ways of acting or through certain institutional structures; wellbeing also depends on the fulfilment of *growth needs* (of self-actualisation) that is a process in which a person's potentials and capacities can be enhanced without exact limits (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014, p. 2165). In this study, the participants' perceptions then presented a multidimensional and relational view of wellbeing, in which *the access to and the quality of material resources* created the foundation for wellbeing. These perceptions also brought to the fore barriers to more sustainable living particularly with regard to their material resources and consumption. The process of well-becoming was then supported by *purposeful and meaningful activities* and conscious practices, requiring furthermore a sense of belonging and caring for one's *social relations* and *the natural environment*. However, sometimes the natural environment was given a rather instrumental value in the participants' perceptions. Finally, integral to the process of well-becoming was furthermore the all-encompassing sphere of *self-actualisation* and the role of *health*,

⁹ The University Student Health Survey 2016 was conducted to explore students' physical, mental and social health, and the target group consisted of under 35-year old Finnish undergraduate students in Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences.

and these categories were oftentimes correlational with the other thematic categories. The findings of this study thus emphasised the relationality of our being: both with regard to the interconnectedness and interdependence of the different dimensions of wellbeing, but furthermore with our social and ecological surroundings, also on a global level.

To conclude, the findings in this master's thesis tell a three-fold story. First, the participants were able to fulfil their deficiency needs in the context of a welfare state with the help of different goods, practices and by means of certain institutional structures. According to the participants' perceptions of their wellbeing, the welfare state thus created the foundation for actualising wellbeing. Second, wellbeing was perceived as a process of self-actualisation: the participants pursued and fulfilled their growth needs through multifaceted and conscious practices. The participants were able to engage in activities that supported their well-becoming and pursued relations that were meaningful to them. Third, the participants' perceptions reflected the post-modern complexities of our unsustainable being in the world. The participants' perceptions brought to the fore our double-role as 'global citizens': we are a part of the problem but also a part of the solution. The findings thus emphasise the need for both individual behaviour and socio-cultural and institutional changes required in the pursuit of ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability of the future.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this master's thesis was to examine how university students - the consumers, possible future parents, professionals, global citizens and the decisions-makers of tomorrow - perceive wellbeing. I was thus interested in the participants' subjective perceptions of wellbeing and how being well (and illbeing) was actualised in their lives. These perceptions could give insights into the formation of wellbeing in the context of our unsustainable being in the world and increase the understanding of the role of education in wellbeing, furthermore in relation to sustainability. Accordingly, these perceptions could also provide to considerations over the role of social policy in its primary goal of producing wellbeing.

To answer the research question, I conducted eight qualitative interviews with Finnish university students that were recruited from a specific course 'Introduction to Sustainable Development Studies' at the University of Tampere. Theoretically, I approached wellbeing as a process of *well-becoming* in the context of an ecologically unsustainable world and understood wellbeing as a multidimensional and relational construct founded on need theories. As a result, I interpreted the empirical part of my thesis through the theoretical, multidimensional and needs-based Having-Doing-Loving-Being - model that is founded on the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans with other humans and ecosystems Hirvilammi & Helne (2014). This chapter is organised as follows: I will first summarise the main findings of the data analysis and then continue to discuss these findings in the context of the theoretical framework and previous research. Finally, I will consider the limitations of this study and assess the perspectives for future studies, before the concluding remarks.

The findings in this master's thesis present a multidimensional view of wellbeing and tell a three-fold story of the participants' perceptions. To start with, the participants were able to fulfil their deficiency needs in the context of a welfare state with the help of different goods, ways of acting and by means of certain institutional structures. The welfare state thus created the foundation for actualising wellbeing. As follows, wellbeing was perceived as a process of self-actualisation as the participants pursued and fulfilled their growth needs through multifaceted and conscious practices. The participants were able to engage in activities that supported their well-becoming and pursued relations that were meaningful to them. Lastly, the participants' perceptions reflected the post-modern complexities of our unsustainable being in the world. These perceptions thus called attention to our double-role as 'global citizens' as we are the problem causers but also its solvers in the move towards a more sustainable future.

The HDLB-model (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014) utilised in this study provided a good foundation for the scrutiny of the participants' wellbeing. The model served as a framework and a lens through which to examine wellbeing as a multidimensional and relational construct and enabled the analysis of the participants' perceptions of wellbeing in a systematic manner. These perceptions gave insights into the participants' conscious practices, values and aspirations guiding their lives, and furthermore provided insights into the practises and spheres of unsustainable being. With regard to the HDLB-model and the thematic categories used in the analysis, the participants' perceptions showed correlation and emphasised particularly the centrality of the dimension of Being, specifically in relation to the dimensions of Loving and Doing. These findings support recent arguments as the significance of the sphere of Being for sustainable societies has recently been emphasised by Helne (2019). Thus, the HDLB-lens together with the findings of this study emphasised the relationality of our being: both with regard to the interconnectedness and interdependence of the different dimensions of wellbeing, but also with our social and ecological surroundings. The findings in this study hence brought forward the considerations of and the need for both individual behaviour and socio-cultural and institutional changes required in the pursuit of ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability.

Therefore, I would like to draw attention to the role of values and practices in the transformation towards more sustainable societies, and furthermore emphasise the role of education in the process. In this study, education and learning played a central part in the participants' wellbeing as they were perceived to have cumulative and long-standing effects in the participants' lives, furthermore in relation to their *values* and self-reinforcing activities. These findings then emphasised the importance of education and learning and supported the earlier arguments of the role of education. It has been argued that collective learning processes and investments in human capital can pave way for sustainable wellbeing (Hämäläinen, 2013) and perhaps pave way for 'ecosocial civilization' as suggested by Salonen & Bardy (2015). In other words, when our values, norms and ethics guiding our practices change, so can in the long run our cultures, policies and institutions, too. Therefore, when we begin to collectively comprehend and conceptualise our wellbeing in a multidimensional and relational manner, it has the potential to create a different kind of virtuous circle in our society in which the social and ecological sustainability are central.

From the perspective of social constructionism, our world is shaped by our shared values and practices that are culturally and historically bound (Barr, 2015). As argued, the transformation requires changes in cultural values, norms and lifestyles and ultimately reformations in policies and institutional structures (Hämäläinen, 2013). According to my findings, even though an individual has

a role in the transformation, the individual agency is related to our societal structures and boundaries within which one can pursue wellbeing and a meaningful life. Despite a shift towards post-materialistic values among younger generations (e.g. Inglehart, 2008) and the growing concerns over climate and sustainability (Pekkarinen & Myllyniemi, 2019; Kantar TNS, 2019), the transition has been slow and thus far inadequate on a wider societal level. This also highlights the role of the nation-state and consequently the future direction of a welfare society. As a social-democratic welfare state, Finland (and other Northern nation-states) have been regarded particularly well equipped for the ecological challenges and the transformation towards more sustainable societies (e.g. Helne et al., 2012; Hämäläinen, 2013).

Koch & Fritz (2014) have then scrutinised this ‘synergy hypothesis’ and the role of welfare regimes in building the eco-social state. According to comparative empirical data from EUROSTAT, the World Bank, the OECD, the Global Footprint Network and the International Social Survey Programme, they conclude that from the macro-structural perspective there is no ‘automatic’ development insight for welfare states. In the study, Finland is regarded as a conservative welfare regime and when comparing the state’s environmental performance in 1995 and 2010, Finland is categorised rather as a ‘failing ecostate’. The results are also mixed with regard to the citizens’ opinions and attitudes. With regard to support for state initiatives, people for instance in Finland are more ‘individualistic or sceptical of their governments’ than perhaps surmised. (Koch & Fritz, 2014, pp. 679, 684, 691, 693.) This also calls attention to the definition of wellbeing and the role of the nation-state in ensuring it.

Noteworthy, Milja Holmi (2016) has analysed in her master’s thesis the prevailing conceptions of well-being in Finnish politics of sustainable development and compared these conceptions to critical interpretations of sustainability and wellbeing. Despite the conceptions of wellbeing becoming politicised in the political strategies, sustainability thinking and the political concept of sustainable development have not particularly changed the conception of wellbeing to date (Holmi, 2016). In relation to the problematic starting point of ‘well-having’ in our ecologically, socially, economically and politically unsustainable world, I therefore result back to the role of social policy in conceptualising and producing wellbeing.

The findings in this study supported the conceptualisation of wellbeing in relational and multidimensional terms, based on spheres of interrelated and interdependent human needs. The participants’ perceptions of wellbeing furthermore attested that the popular discourse of well-having through paid employment and increasing consumption is no longer an adequate descriptor for our

relational (well) being in the world. The findings hinted towards a rather opposing trend: the quality over quantity, meaning and purpose over having, and how to be well with yourself while being well with others. According to the findings, several of the participants were deliberating on how they could bring about a better future and enable wellbeing for others, too. Predominantly, their perceptions thus referred to the pursuit of meaningful, purposeful and also socially responsible employment, rather than the mere purpose of accumulating wealth for themselves. The findings thus showed that the participants extended their perceptions of wellbeing beyond their own lives, social circles, species and national borders and beyond current generations on Earth.

Representatives of their generation, the participants are the ones that are going to witness and live with the results of the current policy-making long into the future. As the local and furthermore global citizens, the participants thus addressed the prevailing sustainability issues, primarily that of our unsustainable consumption, and contemplated on their solutions: an individual can act within one's own circles, but systemic changes are required on a higher level. These findings alluded to the persuasiveness of the eudaimonic approach (e.g. O'Neill, 2008; Lamb & Steinberger, 2017), emphasised the view presented by Dodds (1997) and supported the findings in the study by Wilén & Taipale (2019): individuals should be perceived primarily as active citizens and not simply as consumers. Systemic and longstanding changes for more sustainable future thus necessitate a holistic understanding of sustainable wellbeing, that also ought to be the ultimate goal of social policy. Rather than mitigating the ill-being of citizens, social policy of the future ought to be supporting the sustainable being of global citizens as our planetary boundaries and the structures of our society define the limits within which the pursuit of human needs and wellbeing can ultimately take place.

The findings thus alluded to the need for and potentials of the following (eco) social policy measures suggested by Hirvilammi & Helne (2014, pp. 2169-2171): the regulatory policies to influence consumer behaviour and restrict the overuse of natural resources, the increase in the share of socially and environmentally valuable employment, and the promotion of purposeful and responsible activities. The findings furthermore entailed the facilitating of socially and environmentally oriented practices and caring ethos in communities, the improvement of sustainable urban planning and health promotion in support of a simplified and slower life, and furthermore the making of our societies more bureaucratically and legislatively comprehensible and citizen-friendly (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014, pp. 2169-2171). The process for change towards sustainable being can thus be initiated by reframing the popular conceptualisation of wellbeing in relational and multidimensional terms, based on what we *really* need in our unsustainable and connected world.

With regard to this master's thesis I also have to consider the possible limitations of this study. First, the results represented only a part of the researchable world and the data was sample in a certain context and a cultural frame. Therefore, no generalisations could be made on all university students' wellbeing. In addition, by choosing the participants from a specific course it could have influenced their approach to the topic in sense that perhaps some answers were given as they were considered appropriate. However, I do not think these possible additions had any effect in the final findings. Then again, in the future studies utilising the HDLB-model, interviews could be also supplemented with other methods such as surveys to collect complementary information. Subsequently, this would provide a more comprehensive picture of the participants' perceptions of wellbeing. It could also be interesting to examine how the participants perceive their agency and role as citizens and how they can (or cannot) influence our societal issues and structures in relation to sustainability. As the relational paradigm emphasises the interconnectedness and interdependence of our relations, I furthermore began to think about the role of identity and how that relates to sustainable wellbeing and the pursuit towards more sustainable societies. This perspective could also add an interesting dimension to the study on the participants' perceptions.

To conclude, this research was placed in the framework of sustainable wellbeing that has sought to advance a more holistic understanding of human wellbeing established on the interconnectedness and interdependence with our ecosystems. Based on the participants' perceptions, the findings in this master's thesis presented a relational and multidimensional view of wellbeing: the welfare state created the foundation for wellbeing, but the process of well-becoming required furthermore multifaceted and conscious practices, meaningful relations with others and caring for our surroundings. The findings alluded to the significance of post-materialist values beyond unsustainable 'having' and called attention to our global relational being. Thus, the need for both individual behaviour and systemic changes required in the transformation towards more sustainable future and planetary wellbeing. As our planetary boundaries and the structures of our societies define the limits within which individuals can fulfil their interdependent and interrelated needs and pursue wellbeing, social policy of the future ought to support the sustainable (well) being of global citizens. By participating in the reconceptualization of the fundamental goal of social policy, our wellbeing, the social policy of tomorrow could indeed be culture changing.

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HAASTATTELUKYSYMYKSET**1. Miten hyvinvointisi muodostuu:**

- Kuvaile tilanteita, millon koet voivasi hyvin? Miksi juuri näissä tilanteissa?
- Kuvaile tilanteita, milloin hyvinvointisi on heikentynyt/ minkälaiset asiat vaikuttavat negatiivisesti hyvinvointiisi?

2. Omaan hyvinvointiin vaikuttaminen:

- Miten koet pystyväsi lisäämään hyvinvointiasi eli millainen tekeminen/toiminta edistää hyvinvointiasi?

3. Tarkentavat kysymykset:

- Miten koet, että sosiaaliset suhteet vaikuttavat hyvinvointiisi? Millä tavoin?
- Miten koet ihmisenä kehittymisen / henkisen kasvun liittyvän hyvinvointiisi?
- Miten koet, että luonnonympäristö vaikuttaa hyvinvointiisi? Millä tavoin?

4. Yhteenveto:

- Mitä ihmisellä tulisi olla elämässään, eli millaista elämää ihmisen tulisi voida elää, jotta hän voisi hyvin?

Onko lisättävää?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How is your wellbeing formed:

- Describe situations when you consider yourself to be well? Why in these particular situations?
- Describe situations, when you are not that well/what kind of aspects affect your wellbeing negatively?

2. Influencing your own wellbeing:

- How can you increase your wellbeing or what kind of doing/activities improve your wellbeing?

3. Focused questions:

- How do you perceive social relations affect your wellbeing? In what ways?
- How do you perceive growing as a person/mental growth has to do with your wellbeing?
- How do you perceive the natural environment affects your wellbeing? In what ways?

4. Summary:

- What a person should have in their life in order to be well, or what kind of a life a person should be able to live to be well?

Any further comments?

DATA EXTRACTS IN FINNISH

P= Haastateltava

I= Haastattelija

Extract 1

P7: ”Joo, siis lähinnä vaan ne just perustarpeet, lepo, liikunta ja ruoka, tai kun niitä jotenkin tuntuu et kun niitä toivotetaan joka paikassa mut just taas pakko myöntää että totta se on, että koska ne oikeesti vaikuttaa niin paljon siihen hyvinvointiin, että saa kunnolla unta ja saa oikeesti terveellistä ja niinkun ravitsevaa ruokaa.”

Extract 2

P1: ”Ja lisäksi kaikki perustarpeet tulee tietenkin olla tyydytettyinä, pitää olla nukkunut riittävästi, pitää saada semmoista ruokaa, mistä tykkää, ja ei saa olla liikaa stressiä esimerkiksi koulunkäynnistä tai työstä. Ne aina rajottaa sitten sitä, että pystyy, pystyy niinkun täysin antautumaan sille mitä tekee sillä hetkellä. (...) vaik mä aina yritän kieltää sitä, oon nuoresta asti yrittänyt, ja uhmata tätä mutta kyllä niinku terveellinen ruokavalio esimerkiks on niinku perustana hyvinvoinnille...se että syö terveellisesti ja syö hyvin, syö mieluusti jotain, niinku suomalaista, koska täällä ei käytetä mitään GMO:ta ja täällä muutenkin on niinku laadukasta ruokaa...”

Extract 3

P7: ”Ok, no sit kun nää perustarpeet on tyydytetty, voi ei siis tää rupee kuulostaa ihan siltä Maslow:n tarvehierarkialta, mut siis mutta niinku pakko varmaan niinku myöntää että siinäkin on niinku jotain perää, koska sit kun on niinku ne fyysiset tarpeet tyydytetty ni sit ois jotenki ehkä niinku just hyvä myös miettiä sitä että mitä niinku sisältöä se ihminen tarvii elämäänsä. (...)”

Extract 4

P5: ”(..) et jos sulla on vaikka jotain talouden kanssa kauheita ongelmia niin et sä sillon voi kauheen hyvin niinkun missään muillakaan alueilla (...)”

Extract 5

P1: ”Et, just, just kun ei oo elänyt niin puutteessa, niin ei osaa sanoa et mitä kaikkee ihminen sitte oikeesti tarvitsee.”

Extract 6

P7: ”(...) no just ku kerran asutaan täällä niinkun hyvinvointiyhteiskunnassa niin just niinkun ainakin niinkun tämmösten fyysisten tarpeitten tyydyttäminen on hyvin helppoo koska on rahaa millä ostaa ruokaa ja vaatteita ja näin päin pois (...).”

Extract 7

P2: ”(...) mä nyt oon tällanen etuoikeutettu, että mä oon korkeakouluopiskelija ja mulla on taloudellisesti vakaa tilanne, joten mulla ei niinkun mä en koe siitä sellasta stressiä, eli tavallaan siis niilläkin mittareilla mä oon hyvinvoiva, vaikka mä periaatteessa elänkin köyhyysrajan alapuolella ja tällai.”

Extract 8

P4: ”Ja ravinto – mä oon sillee aika tarkka, että just että jos ei saa syödä sillai kun haluaa ja sillon kun haluaa niin se, sit se tota aiheuttaa ihan sitä niinku muutakin ärtymystä ja pahoinvointia. (...) Mä periaatteessa oon kasvissyöjä, ovo-lakto, mutta tota, mut sillee niinku tarvittaessa vaan syön lihaa ja varsinki kalaa – matkoilla syön kun tilanne vaatii.”

I: Onko se eettisistä syistä vai minkä takia?

P4: ”No mä oon alottanu hirveen nuorena, ehkä 13, kun mä oon lopettanu lihan syönnin niin sit sillai alkaa varmaan olla jo tavastaki kyse, mutta alun perin eettisistä syistä.”

Extract 9

P3: ”Mä olin joskus kasvissyöjä, ja ajoittain mulla on vieläkin pätkiä että mä syön kasvisruokaa enimmäkseen (...).”

I: Onko se eettisistä syistä vai minkä takia?

P3: ”Se on eettisistä syistä, kun mä en pidä siitä tehotuotannosta ja mitenkä eläimiä kohdellaan ja varsinkin nyt kun on uutisiin noussu niistä teurastamoistakin niitä juttuja, niin sitä vaan aina uudestaan ja uudestaan joutuu pöyristyy siitä kuinka eläimiä kohdellaan, niin mä oon niinkun mieluummin, sanoudun irti siitä, ja sitte syön jotain tofua, vaikka se ois tuotu jostakin maailman toiselta puolelta niin ainakaan se ei oo kiduttanu ketään.”

Extract 10

P5: ”Noi on semmosii tavallaan niinku teknisiä juttuja just tämmönen syöminen ja nukkuminen, että ne voi niinku tavallaan niinkun tuntua, että niihin on semmonen niinkun kontrolli.”

I: No mitenkäs sitten eläimet liittyy sun hyvinvointiin, sä oot vegaani eettisistä syistä?

P5: ”Joo, eettisistä syistä... Että just se kun niinku rupes vähän ymmärtää ett mitä, mitä eläimille tehdään ett niinkun tulee joku jauhelihapaketti kauppaan niin, ei siinä kauheen kauan tarvinnu miettiä, että niinkun omien elämänvalintojen muutosta.”

Extract 11

P7: ”Mutta nytki vaikka tää mun kasvispainotteinen ruokavalio kun se on ikäänkuin linjassa just vaikka kestävän kehityksen oppien kanssa niin jotenki se tuottaa mulle semmosta hyvää oloa koska mä toimin mun arvojen mukaisella tavalla ja mä ikään kuin koen, että se on tieteellisestikin järkevää ja näin.”

Extract 12

P6: ”Tiistaina oikeesti, tiistaina on maailman kauhein päivän koulussa ja mä meen siis kauppaan ja sitten oon niin nälissäni, mä ostan siis lohen, mä aattelen että lohi on niin hyvää mä tarviin lohtulohta, sit mä ostin lohen ja se oli ihan jees. Sit oli asiat paremmin vähän aikaa.”

P6: ”Mä oon kyllä lihansyöjä, mä en nyt ehkä kauheen ylpeä oo siitä, mä oon koittanu jotenkin vähentää sitä, mutta kyl mä oon vähä paatunut lihansyöjä, mutta kyllä mä niinku tiedän et se ei niinku oo niinkun ekosysteemin kannalta se ei oo mitenkään kauheen järkevää (...) kyllä se on mulle semmonen, mikä pitää niinku muuttua, ihan sen jotenkin sen asenteekin, että et ei me voida olla niin lihansyöjiä kuin me ollaan nyt mun mielestä kyllä. Jotenki maailmanlaajuisestikaan. (...) et kyl mä ajattelen et jos mulla ois semmonen niinku tasapaino siin semmonen jotenki myös samalla luontoa kunnioittava ruokavalio niin kyl se varmasti ois semmonen jotenkin raikkaampi olo tai semmonen et ei ois niin tunkkanen olo varmaan tai niin mä ainakin kuvittelisin.”

Extract 13

P2: ”(...) ehkä mulla on ollut sellasta huopaamista ja soutamista esimerkiks ton lihan syönnin kanssa... ja tota... en mä niinku, niin, en mä kyl niinku sinänsä ihan hirveesti lihaa, no nykyään kun mä syön täällä koulussa aika paljon niin niin ei se sit aina vaikuta, niinku mä saatan vaikka esimerkiks syödä sitä ruokaa niinku ku on pari kolme tarjolla niin jos se kasvisruoka ei niinku yhtään houkuta niin sit mä niinku sitä mä otan jotain liharuokaa, mutta tota, mutta joo kyllä mä uskon että, että tuo on tietty semmonen joka pitäis muuttua tavallaan...”

Extract 14

P5: ”(...) niin tohon nykyseen paikkaan muutin ihan vaan kun pääsin opiskelee ja sitte piti muuttaa sieltä lähemmäs 600€ kuukaudessa maksavasta paikasta vähän halvempaan niin niin tota, mut mulla oli ihan selkeetä että kun mä tuolta lähen muuttaa pois niin se

on niinku kommuuni koska se on se on mulle tärkeä sillee, että tota no koti tuntuu niinkun kodilta kun siellä on porukkaa (...).”

Extract 15

P7: ”(...) niin se ois just hyvä, että että yhteiskunta niinkun tarjoais sellasia hyvinvointia tuottavia mahdollisuuksia, kuten vaikka just siis mitä nykyäänkin tehdään asuntopolitiikassa sitä että että niinkun mietitään oikeesti että mihin niitä asuntoja rakennetaan ja miten päin, että naapurit vuorovaikuttaa toistensa kanssa ja just kaikkee niitä virkistysalueita, niin on se sillä tavalla tärkeä, et se ympäristö myös tukee sitä semmosta hyvinvoinnin kehittymistä.”

Extract 16

P4: ”(...) ehkä jonkinlainen kulttuurillemme ominainen tällöinen edistysajattelu koskee myös, että niinku onnistumisen tunne vaikuttaa myös siihen, että tuntuu että silloin kokee voivansa hyvin, jos mietin esimerkiksi ratsastusta, että minkä takia myös mulle tulee siinä hyvin paljon niin se on se, että niinku pienen hetken onnistuu tekemään jotain vaikeeta, ja sitte voi olla ylpeä siitä itseksensä.”

Extract 17

P5: ”Ja tota, no toinen sitten jos aattelee, niin toinen kategorioista on varmaan tommonen niinkun liikunta. Liikunnasta aiheutuva semmonen niinku hyvä olo, että niinku voi käydä pitkällä pyörälenkillä tai salilla tai joogaa tai käy juoksemassa niin siitä tulee semmonen niinku semmonen selkeä ja semmonen reipas hyvä fiilis. Ja sitten ehkä kolmas on niinku, mä pyrin päivittäin tekee semmosta niinkun... no vähän semmosta niinku mindfulness- tyyppistä muodollista mediaatioharjoitusta, niin tota, sen yhteydessä muodostuva niinkun tasapainoinen hyvä olo, niin se on kans tosi tärkeä.”

Extract 18

P1: ”Mikä estää ketään tekemästä mitään, kaikki voi tehdä jos vaan haluaa. Mut et se on niinku mulle tosi tärkeä et tehdään paljon erilaisia asioita, kiivetään jonnekin katolle ja tehdään kaikkee semmosta jännää, mä haluaisin tehdä laskuvarjohypyn ja kaikkee semmosta – et seikkailu on se ehkä mikä pitää mut elossa kaikista eniten.”

Extract 19

P4: ”Sitte, sit myös niinku kävely ja sellanen, vaikei se oiskaa niin urheilua, mutta niinku, semmonen vapaa oleminen ja ulkona liikkuminen.”

I: Luonnossa vai yleensäkin ulkona ihan?

P4: ”No luonnossa jos mahdollista, mutta siis asun keskustassa niin ei tuu ihan kauheen usein tuu mentyä kauheen pitkälle, mutta kuitenkin pihalla luonnossa. Ja mä ratsastan

niin se on kanssa semmosta urheilua ulkona niin sillon kans, se on tosi voimaannuttavaa.”

Extract 20

P7: ”(...) oon kyllä semmonen niinku semmonen rauhaa rakastava ihminen niin sit jotenkin ne luonto kyl on tosi tärkeä elementti ja niinkun myös siinä suhteessa, että luonto myös niinku tarjoaa niin paljon siis kaikkee muutakin kun sitä vaan henkistä hyvinvointia, koska esimerkiksi sieltä saa marjoja ja sieniä, jotka siis taas toisaalta tukee sitä mun fyysistä hyvinvointia sen ruuan kautta ja vitamiinien kautta ja näin päin pois. Et siis luonto on kyllä ihan niinkun tosi tosi tärkeä.”

Extract 21

P5: ”Joo, siis, se ensinnäkin niinkun rentouttaa ihan selkeesti et et, että tota ja vaan kun menee, ei tarvii ees olla niinkun mikään niinkun sen kummempi sademetsä kun käy, Pyynikille meneminen riittää, et sen huomaa niinku että vaik siellä sit kuuluukin liikenteen meteliä niin se, että on niinkun jonkunlaisessa luonnossa niin se niinkun tota alentaa stressitasoja ja niinku tulee semmonen jotenkin niinkun rentoutuneempi olo.”

P5: ”(...) siis, mulle on tosi tärkeä olla luonnon lähellä mutta ei se kyllä mun käyttäytymisessä mitenkään näy, että mä niinkun juuri koskaa käy missä luonnossa vaan niinkun sen muutaman kerran kun sinne pääsee menee niin miks mä en tee tätä useemmin mutta, ei sinne jotenkin tuu mentyy.”

Extract 22

P2: ”(...) no mä koen olevani vähän sillai ehkä vieraantunut luonnosta tai sillain, että tota.. et mä en niinkun ehkä hirveesti viihdy luonnossa, tai sillai, että, tai että ehkä se on sellanen suhde mitä mä haluaisin syventää, ja tällain, että tota... et, mä oon jotenkin niin kaupunkilainen ja sillain, ja... tunnen itteni, et mä jos mä...vaik tuossa muutama vuos sitten mä menin kaverin kaa Lappiin patikoimaan muutamaks päiväks, jotain viis päivää, niin jotenkin tosi levoton musta vähän tuli ja siel jopa tulee vähän sellast tiettyä ahdistusta, et mä oon nyt niinkun poissa sivistyksestä tai niinku jotenkin, se on vähän sellanen outo tunne, mut jotenkin vähän alkaa ahdistaa.”

Extract 23

I: Mikä merkitys sulle on koulutuksella tässä ihmisenä kehittämisessä, tai muutenki elämässä?

P5: ”(...) no se siis niinku nykyään tuntuu et, mitä enemmän tässä on opiskellu niin sitä niinkun isompi merkitys sillä on, että tuota, just täs kun on vaikka päässy graduun kiinni niin tota se on ollu tosi mielekästä, että siis se on on tosi palkitsevaa et niinkun ylipäättään oppii uutta, että niinkun löytää iteltään semmosen niinkun, että on oppinu

semmosii taitoja, mitä sitte niinkun ehkä joskus voi käyttää jopa jossain työelämässä, niin se on tosi iso juttu (...) Ja kyl siis ylipäätään tuntuu et se, että on niinku päässy yliopistoon et pystyy niinku opiskelemaan tääl niin se on tosi iso juttu mun niinkun oman hyvinvoinnin kannalta, että on semmonen niinkun jonkunlainen suunta ja jotain tuollasta niinkun tosi kiinnostavaa tekemistä.”

Extract 24

P7: ”(...) että mulle just no yliopisto-opiskelu on niinkun antanu niin paljon tietoa, et se jotenkin on samalla lisänny myös mun henkistä hyvinvointia, koska mä oon jotenki voinut omassa elämässäni alkaa toimimaan niin, että mä jotenki koen, että se on oikein tai sillä tavalla niinku tutkimustiedon mukaista toimintaa.”

Extract 25

P7: ”No ehkä no siis semmonen ihan no nyt tää liittyy ehkä vähän siihen koulutukseenki, mut siis lähinnä just se, että ihmisillä myös toisaalta pitäis olla niinkun tietoa saatavilla niistä hyvinvoinnin tai hyvinvointia tuottavista asioista, ja toisaalta olis myös ihanaa jos olis semmonen yhteiskunta, joka niinku kannustais ja ohjais sellaseen niinkun hyvinvointia tuottavuuteen, vaikka tottakai varmasti niinkun hyvinvointikäsityksiä on tosi monenlaisia, mut just vaikka joku koulutus nyt varmaan on aika semmonen, mistä niinku vallitsee konsensus, että tämä on hyvä juttu (...).”

Extract 26

P8: ”No joo, mä oon aika monessa ollu mukana, nyt tietysti se on aina aikakysymys (...) oon monessa järjestössä ollu töissä, tai vapaaehtosena SPR:ssä ja siinä ollu sairaalassa töissä ja Surunauhassa oon ollu totanoinniin niinku toiminnassa mukana (...).”

Extract 27

P5: ”(...) se itseasiassa nyt, kun tuli eläimistä puhe, niin ylipäätään se voidaan niinku jotenki, niinku merkityksellinen toiminta, että oon nyt yrittänyt vähän aktivoitua niinku tommosesa järjestössä uudestaan pitkän ajan kuluttua, että se on kyllä semmonen, mitä niinku selkeesti, et niinku voi toimia niinku omien arvojen mukaisesti, tai niinku että voi ehkä vaikuttaa asioihin, niin se on kyllä niinku tärkeetä.”

I: Missä järjestössä sä oot?

P5: ”No yritän nyt tota aktivoituu uudestaan tossa niinkun Oikeutta eläimille -porukassa (...) Tampereella tietysti yliopistolla on pidetty semmosta Tampereen yliopiston vegaanit-järjestöä (...).”

Extract 28

P7: ”(..) no siis joku kolmisen vuotta sitten niin mä tutustuin siis ihan Pirkanmaan eläinsuojeluyhdistyksen toimintaan ja ryhdyin sitte tilapäiskodiks, (...) niin jotenkin niinku senkin kautta on tullu tosi paljon semmosta eläintietoutta ja vaikka se niinkun pitkälti keskittyyki siis lemmikkieläimiin tää niinku eläinyhdistyksen toiminta niin silti siellä myös paljon puhutaan eläinsuhteesta ylipäättään ja just niinku eläinten kaikkien eläinten arvostamisesta, mikä sitten taas todella hyvin niinku liittyy justiinsa yhteiskuntatieteisiin ja varsinki vaikka niinku feministisiin teorioihin ja just kestäväään kehitykseen (...).”

Extract 29

I: Sä mainitsit, että jotain, että sä haluaisit työskennellä jonkun kehitysyhteistyön parissa - niin mikä sua kiinnostaa?

P3: ”Joo. No, mua kiinnostais, tai mä unelmoin tosta hommasta jostakin esim. SPR:llä, tai Punasella Ristillä jossain muualla päin maailmaa (...) tai vaikka jossain tuolla Ulkoministeriössä, tai... jossakin, missä sais tehdä niinku kehitysavun piirissä hommia.”

Extract 30

P8: ”(..) ja nään tosi merkityksellisenä myös työn, että hankkii itselleen semmosen työn, jolla tekee parempaa ja semmosta, tekee semmosta elämää, joka rakentaa eikä hajota. (...) kyllä mä haluaisin olla vaikka tiedottajana jossain yleishyödyllisessä humanitaarisessa järjestössä tai toimia, puhua semmosten ihmisten kanssa, ihmisten suilla, joilla ei oo mahdollisuutta siihen, tai tutkia semmosia asioita, jotka on mitkä ajattelee että ne tulee niinkun itsestäänselvyytenä.”

Extract 31

P4: ”(..) että jos esimerkiksi ei olis perhettä ja jos ei olis ystäviä, niin mistä sitten sais hyvinvointia. (...) Et ehkä niinku jos pitäis tosi pitkiä aikoja olla ilman että on ketään niin sit se vois olla hyvinkin huonoksi hyvinvoinnille.”

Extract 32

P7: ”(..) koska vaik se terveys onki tosi tärkeä ni ehkä silti ne kanssaihmiset on tärkeempiä ainaki siis mulle.”

Extract 33

P5: ”No, ainakin sellasta että, et sillon niinkun kokee olevansa hyväksytty ja rakastettu ja sillee, et sillä on niinkun merkityksellisiä ihmissuhteissa ja se kuuluu johonkin.(...) kyl se on yks tärkeimpiä juttuja niinku elämässä, se että niinkun, se on ylipäättään musta niinku huikeeta, että voi luoda yhteyden johonki ihmiseen, niin se, se on kyl yks ehdottomasti tärkeimpiä ellei niinku tärkein, jotta niinkun hyvinvoinnin kannalta.”

Extract 34

P8: "(...) ollaan laumaeläimiä (...) meidän pitää koko ajan toimia muiden kanssa ja en, en tiedä onks kukaan pärjäiks kukaan niinkun ihan yksin täällä maailmassa. Mulle niinkun ystävät, kaverit ja läheiset, perhe ja plus muut ihmiset joita mä kohtaan ihan satunnaisesti niin on todella tärkeitä (...)."

Extract 35

P2: "(...) just niinku se liittyy sillon kun oli nuorempi ja oli jotenkin itsekeskeinen, tai masentunu ihminen on helposti, tai mun mielestä on aika itsekeskeinen, ehkä niinku se kaikki pyörii siinä jotenkin sillai, ja sä et ymmärrä sun niinkun.. ehkä sä et ymmärrä niinku kaikkia niitä liitoksia tai kuinka niinkun yhdessä tässä ollaan, tai että kun, kuinka merkittävä sä oot niinkun samalla ku toisaalta sä oot kun me ollaan toisaalta ihan täysin niinkun merkityksettömiä."

Extract 36

P8: "(...) kun mä puhuin niistä laskuista niin mä tarkotan ihan konkreettisesti tosi kamalia laskuja, sitte kyl noi toi äidin menettäminen oli mulle se, että mä en ees uskonu että mä voisin koskaan voida sen jälkeen hyvin. Ja ja... oon siis menettänyt tosi hyviä ystäviä myös tässä matkan varrella vaikka oon vasta 24 vuotias niin tuntuu että ihan tarpeeks on niinkun yhdelle elämälle jo tullu menetyksiä - sillon mä kokenut että sit ei oo niinkun hyvinvoinnin kanssa mitään tekemistä tällä aikana."

Extract 37

P3: "Kyl mä oon aina tota ollu itekki semmosen kestäväen kehityksen kannalla ja just halunnu kierrättää kaiken mahdollisen ja jättää itestäni, tai ois mukava jättää itestään mahdollisimman pieni hiilijalanjälki ja ja.. ja niinkun, niin, kyllä mulle noista noitten kurssien aikana on tullu semmonen toivo että ehkä tää maailman tilanne ei ookaan ihan korjaamattomissa."

Extract 38

P1: "Että meidän hyvinvointi ei voi olla riippuvaista siitä että joku toinen voi pahoin.. että se ei oo sillon kestävää."

Extract 39

P5: "Mutta sit semmoset asiat, mihin ei oo kontrollia on niinku just vaikka ihmissuhteissa saattaa olla kriisejä tai jos alkaa huolestuttaa joku niin maailmanpoliittinen tilanne tai, ympäristön tila tai joku tämmönen, niin ne kyl vie sitä hyvinvointia pois."

Extract 40

P8: ”Moni asia kyl mua huolettaa, mutta enemmänkin mä oon onnellinen siitä, et sitä on ryhdytty systemaattisesti tutkii ja siitä puhutaan ja ja... tietosuus laajenee ja muuta. No mua huolettaa tietysti ilmasto ja ja todella suuri asia on se, et täällä on niin resurssit on niin epätasan ripoteltu (...) ja meillä ois niinkun mahdollisuudet ratkasta lapsikuoll-tai siis yleinen nälänhätä, mutta ei oo tahtotilaa semmoseen. Et kyllä se mun mielestä on aika oksettavaa ja sit mua huolestuttaa se ja, tota, riepottelee mun hyvinvointiani.

P8: ”(...) just mä haluaisin myös et meillä ois tulevaisuudessakin sitä luontoo, mistä voi nauttia, et... ettei me raiskattas tätä maapalloo ihan niin paljoo, mitä ollaan nyt tehty. Mut toki, niin isoja asioita, että vaatii sen niinku vaatii paljon, mutta mä en näe sitä niinku mahdottomana.”

Extract 41

P1: ”(...) Ja, no, niinku me ollaan opiskeluissakin puhuttu niin se voi hyvinkin olla niin että että maapallo ei tarvitse meitä ihmisiä, vaan me ihmiset tarvitaan maapalloa, ja jos me ihmiset vahingoitetaan maapalloo liikaa, niin se karistaa lopulta meidät päältä ja jatkaa omaa elämäänsä, se jatkaa niinku mitään ei ois tapahtunutkaan (...).”

Extract 42

P1: ”Mä koen, että mä pystyn niinkun bisnesmaailmassa tuomaan jotain positiivistakin kun se nähdään usein niin kovin negatiivisena (...) mä haluan, että me länsimaisina kuluttajina pystytään käyttäytymään vastuullisemmin, eikä riistämään sitten jotain muita ihmisiä.”

Extract 43

P7: ”(...) luonto on ollu mulle kyllä aina aina siis tärkeä elementti, mutta ehkä se on jotenki niinku muuttunu sitten ikäkausittainkin tai just ku lapsena ny mä leikin jossain ojassa jollain mudalla kun nyt sitten taas just ehkä sitä luontoo osaa ikäänkuin just laaja-alaisemmin arvostaa ja niinkun ns. niinku hyödyntää just siinä suhteessa että sieltä saa jotakin luonnon antimia mitä sitten voi niinku omaan hyvinvointiin hyödyntää (epäselvä ääni).”

Extract 44

P2: ”No, mä käytin äskönkin tuota sanaa vieraantunut niin, ehkä mä vaan jotenkin niinku että, tai et jos mä puhun että mä haluan kulkee kohti sitä pistettä, jos mä oon jotenkin niinkun, mulla on sellanen järkevä suhtautuminen elämään tai niinku asioihin niin, niin niinkun sit jos mä tarkastelen kokonaisuutena sitä miten niinkun ihmiset, ihmiskunta toimii, niin ei me toimita niinku, me toimitaan niinku huonosti ja me

toimitaan tavallaan niinku itsetuhoisesti myös. Ja just että me niinkun nähdään itsemme jotenkin erillisenä sit sitten muusta kaikesta, kaikesta muusta.”

Extract 45

P1: ”(...) kerran mä luin tämmösen lauseen, mulla ei oo mitään muistikuvaa mistä mä luin sen, mut mä luin että luonnonsuojeleminen on Jumalan kunnioittamista. Ja se pysäytti mut, mä rupesin miettii että voisko olla näin..ja sit, kun mä mietin ja mietin niin mä tulin siihen tulokseen että kyllä oikeestaan, että joo, että kyllä, niin sit sen jälkeen se on ollut lähempänä sydäntä (...).”

Extract 46

I: Miten koet ihmisenä kehittymisen tai henkisen kasvun liittyvän hyvinvointiisi?

P6: ”Mun mielestä se on aika iso juttu, varsinki nyt kun alotti tässä niinku yliopistossa ja mä olin siis töissä ennen tätä niin tuntui että niinku tyhmennyin edellisessä koulussa ja edellisessä työpaikassa ja mulle on ollut tosi iso juttu että mä oon päässy tänne niikun ihan opiskelemaan asioita.”

P6: ”Kyl mä jotenki...mun mielestä se on kauheen tyydyttävää, et mä jotenki, vähän vaikee selittää.. tai mä nautin siitä, että mä tavallaan tiedän asioita ja tykkään asioista niin se on ollu semmonen iso. Sit mun ehkä tavoitteena on ehkä se, et kun mä ite tiedän jotenki paljon asioita niin sit mä oon ehkä hyödykkäämpi joillekin muille tai siis kun mulla on tämmönen tausta tässä opiskelussa ni se jotenkin ajaa mua eteenpäin.”

Extract 47

P8: ”(...) kun mulle tulee sellanen olo, että mä oon tehny jotain järkevää, että mä pystyn elää mun valintojen kanssa et silloin mä, tai jos on onnistunu tehny jotain konkreettisesti hyvää vaikka vapaaehtoistyötä tai onnistunu just jossain projektissa tai ymmärtäny oppinu jonkun uuden asian, se parantaa mun hyvinvointia.”